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GREAT BRITAIN AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS (1813–1815)

A STUDY IN BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

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THE ENGLISH: ARE THEY HUMAN?

by

DR. G. J. RENIER

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The Germans live in Germany;
The Romans live in Rome;
The Turkeys live in Turkey;
But the English live at home.

(J. H. Goring, *The Ballad of Lake Laloo and other Rhymes*, 1909)

PREFACE

I wish to thank the numerous English acquaintances who have provided me with models for this portrait of the English, and all my friends in London and in the country-side who have helped me, by the mere fact of their existence, to visualise the England of the future.

I am grateful to Mr. R. C. Trevelyan for having communicated to me, with permission to publish, a letter written to his maternal great-grandfather by his great-uncle, and to those who contributed Press-cuttings for my chapter entitled "The Best in the World". My thanks are also due to Mr. B. N. Langdon-Davies, who suggested that I should put in writing the observations made and the theories evolved during seventeen years of English life, and to Mr. David Hallett, whose English good taste and un-English lucidity of thought saved me from many pitfalls in the course of my work.

G. J. R.

INTRODUCTION

May a foreigner raise his voice? Is his distorted vision of "reality" worth communicating?

Is the vision of England, seen by an "alien" resident, worthy of record? The vision must needs be blurred, for the spectator lacks both the freshness of perception of one who has recently arrived in this country, and the final and supreme understanding of the native who grew up among his own people and in the shadow of the country's institutions. Many things no longer offend as they did when he first became aware of them, and yet will never to him appear sacrosanct and part of the eternal scheme of things. A "Come to Church" campaign in the unclerical columns of a popular paper appears to him neither hypocritical nor congruous. To register rather than to judge is his usual reaction to what he notices around him.

The foreigner pays rates and taxes. He often spends in England money earned abroad. He has no share in the government of the country to which, economically and frequently also sentimentally, morally and intellectually, he now belongs. Why should an outsider have a voice in the management of the British household? So many Britons do not use the voice that is theirs by right. So many others utter it in vain, owing to an electoral system which goes far to correct the perils of democracy and to save it from degenerating into mob-rule. Moreover

it would be indiscreet to ask the English to follow the Italian example and disfranchise themselves in order to end what may or may not be their unfair advantage over the foreign resident. To apply the remedy by starting from the other end, that is, by giving the vote to foreigners, is a suggestion that appears impracticable. It has been put forward, but under circumstances that were very different from those that rule in this kingdom. One of the reasons which made the English go to war with the Boer republics of South Africa was that the Boers refused to give the vote to settlers from England. But then it was a case of Englishmen disfranchised among foreigners. To compare this anomaly with the very natural disfranchisement of foreigners among the English is to show a reprehensible lack of the sense of values.

How far does the legal infancy of the economically self-supporting and rightly voteless foreigner go? He is allowed to think. Of this there can be no doubt. The very air of England proclaims with eloquence the freedom of men's thoughts. Whether thoughts freely thought may be uttered with equal freedom is another question. Perhaps it depends upon the utterer. The voice of Miss Radclyffe Hall is stifled where, unmolested, Edward Carpenter sang and Compton Mackenzie chortles. Such distinctions must not be condemned out of an inordinate love of logic and unity. The introduction of ruthless equality would deprive England of that picturesqueness which is its very own, and, carried to extreme consequences, it would prevent our obtaining from

benevolent robots the cigarettes which, at night, may not be handed out by human agency. For, be it realised, levelling never works in the sense of tolerance. When my father punished my brother by depriving him of a sweet, he used to refuse one to me, for the sake of equality. To my plea that equality would also be safe if we were both given a sweet, he answered that justice would suffer if my brother went unpunished.

All this does not settle the question of the foreigner's right of utterance. We know him to be vocal: how overflowing with opinions and information a walk through Soho will reveal. It is a fact, also, that a Swedish tailor may not speak in favour of ca' canny at a meeting of bricklayers. Perhaps his advice would be superfluous. Perhaps also, if he addressed the bricklayers in favour of increased production, no obstacles would be placed in his way. But apart from this minor disability, it would appear that the foreigner is only subject to the same vagaries that affect the freedom of utterance of British subjects.

There remains, however, the infinitely more important censorship of good taste. It must be a self-imposed censorship. That silence is golden is the Alpha and Omega of wisdom. But who is wise, save the unvocal? The silence of the English is one of their charms, but also one of their weaknesses, perhaps their main weakness. It is a source of repressions, and one of the reasons that have made them the most exploited of all the white races upon the face of the earth. To provoke the English into articulateness might be by no means a disservice.

Still, it remains an open question whether one should be uncivil in order to be helpful. Most Englishmen would say No. Many foreigners would say Yes. Let me, therefore, plead my special status of an outsider to crave indulgence. I cannot be judged by the exacting standards which the English set for themselves. I am *capitis minor*.

To which I might add that my expression of opinion is not altogether uninvited. If English people do not display the persistence of Americans in interviewing their visitors, they have nevertheless often asked me what I thought of England. I have answered in all sincerity that I thought it the prettiest country I know. In the impersonal way which characterises them, my friends have less frequently asked me what I thought of the English. When they did, I have answered them truthfully, but the whole truth I have not often given. Truth, thank heaven, is many-sided. In conversation all its aspects need not be displayed. But writing is different. When writing one must take the risk of offending rather than that of being incomplete. Elimination for reasons of taste is legitimate, but elimination for reasons of tact can never be excused in an author. Tact may impose silence, it should never command truncation.

. . . . .

Thrown among the English more by accident than by design, I have settled down in their country with what I can only describe as a feeling of determination. It has been my task, for many years, to interpret England to foreigners in its political, social and

financial aspects. My sense of comparison has been sharpened by this work, but whatever my personal preference may have been, the conception of life and the manner of living of the English have, as a whole, appeared admirable to me.

In expressing my opinions of the English I shall be frank. If I see much that is admirable, I see much also that is imperfect and not infrequently my sense of this imperfection has been heightened by the conviction of so many English people that nothing but perfection dwells within their shores. But, even when critical, I wish never to be taken for a preacher. It is not the task of the foreigner to reform. Where there is room for improvement, the impulse towards better things must come from within. Moreover, if in shedding their blemishes the English also rid themselves of their own nature, they might be the losers, and the world with them. For I believe that English civilisation, even though it be deficient in culture and in breadth, is a fine thing; while, in the few cases where it has flowered into culture and self-realisation, it is supreme.

Objectivity should not be sought in these pages that are twice removed from reality: there is the distortion of my own vision, and the further deflection due to my expression. I shall be doing no more than thinking aloud, and those I address are those who move around me, the English among whom I live, whose interests are mine, and whose prejudices, to some extent, I have adopted. Honest I shall be, in so far as I shall try honestly to express my bias.

. . . . .

I am speaking about the English, not about the British. There is no question in this work of the Scots, proud, intelligent, religious and unfathomable. Nor of the Welsh, minute, musical, clever and temperamental. I am not writing about the charming, untruthful, bloodthirsty and unreliable Irish. I shall be exclusively concerned with the English, the unintellectual, restricted, stubborn, steady, pragmatic, silent and reliable English.

And so, with a continental shrug of the shoulders, I hold up my distorted mirror to Narcissus.

THE ENGLISH: ARE THEY HUMAN?

I

THE FOREIGNER IN ENGLAND

The sense of bewilderment of a foreign resident in England. The tolerance of superior persons. Englishmen and human beings

London looms over the shy foreign visitor, immense, immeasurable. How is he to cope with a town that has no centre? He may, if he is wise, choose Trafalgar Square as the point from which to radiate his explorations. But Piccadilly Circus, Hyde Park Corner, would resent this invidious discrimination. There is no heart in London from which the civic life goes throbbing through the arteries of London County. Londoners do not live in London. 'Buses and trams carry them away from the city where they earn their livelihood and from the West End where they seek their organised pleasures. As they pass, their unmoving faces betray nothing of their preoccupations,

nothing of their preferences or their dislikes. Oh, these unmoving faces of a phlegmatic race! The visitor gazes at them, with all the wonder which he cannot spend on monuments that have little meaning and less artistic value. He may find London rich in museums, but as a city it offers nothing that can interest him apart from a Lord Mayor's Show. Life has not linked him yet to its grey stones which will acquire a significance only by association with his daily concerns and emotions.

The foreigner only sees the perennial puzzle of an Englishman's face that guards the secret of a soul like a sphinx before a temple where mysterious rites are celebrated. And the town itself presents the same immovable appearance. London is as inscrutable as it is immeasurable. Of personal life it unveils only the inchoation of thousands of indigestions with the spectacle of hurried lunches, strangely cooked meats and tasteless boiled vegetables consumed in deep and dark recesses, served by bad-tempered and overworked waitresses. Cafés, with their superficial acquaintanceship full of goodwill, with buzzing conversation of leisurely people, there are none, and the one spectacle of the streets is the convulsion of London's mechanical life, the unceasing labour of complicated and seemingly aimless transport.

Here, indeed, appears a familiar figure. The London policeman, huge, pacific, and friendly, is famous even among those who have never seen England. The absence of a sword and of a gun emphasises his power of peaceful persuasion. He guides and assists, directs the traffic, does know the way when he is

asked, and consents to impart his knowledge. He proves such a complete contrast to his continental equivalent that travellers return from London with wonderful tales about him. The visitor recognises him among novel and bewildering surroundings. But even the existence of policemen cannot give the sense of rest and homeliness that is required for loving London. One feeling comes, grows and remains: that of oppression. "Never, never", the visitor mutters to himself, "could I live in this place of disquiet."

And then, maybe, the gods agree on an unexpected move. They place the foreigner in London, no longer a visitor, but an "alien" resident. The English are owners of their speech, and the man from another country cannot rob them of their right to call him an "alien". But when he comes to feel the value of words in the language of his country of adoption, he writhes under the lash of the heinous word, although he is unable to explain the nature of the injury to those English who are so peculiarly unconcerned about the strange and complex beauty of the marvellous language it is their good fortune to wield. He must consent to be called an "alien"—*alienus*, an outsider, one who is different—instead of a "foreigner"—one who comes from outside the country, a word which kindly ignores those notions of difference, of being other than English, which to the English means less-than-English, an inferior. "Alien" dwells on quality, "foreigner" only on locality.

The foreigner seeks out for himself a little corner

of London, and no sooner has he deposited his domestic gods over the hearth of his very own room than he receives as by revelation the exquisite gift of familiarity. His home becomes a centre for explorations; all his journeys link it up with spots that have a meaning in his own life. He goes to his work, returns to his home, goes to his pleasures, and again has a home whither to return. Soon he finds friends whom he can visit. For if the Englishman does not disclose his soul, he readily opens his home. A Frenchman may reveal his life secrets after half an hour's acquaintance. But he does not ask one home. There are people in small French towns who have met twice daily for thirty years at their usual café. They call one another by their Christian names and have become bosom friends. But neither of them has ever met the other's wife.

Here in England you are asked home for dinner, even if you are not in a position to return the compliment. Soon invitations for week-ends will follow, and when you sit down at the Sunday dinner you may rely upon it that no special china-ware or plate looks with astonishment upon the unwonted daylight. You share the usual life of your hosts, in its simplicity and its intimacies. No one will rub in the regrettable fact that the visitor has not the privilege of being English. The Englishman has such an absolute notion of his superiority over all that is not English that he can sit down with a member of an inferior race with the grace of manner that is born of security of tenure.

Even the London traffic acquires a meaning for

the foreign resident. He becomes familiar with the numbers of omnibus routes. 'Buses are no longer merely red monsters that rattle past: they are friendly conveyances that take him whither he wishes. The sense of oppression disappears, the maze can be threaded, and at the very end of every journey, like a beacon, shines his home.

Thus far, apart from minor differences, the reactions are much alike in every individual case. But after the initial stage of familiarisation, distinctions begin to appear. Some foreign residents become hopelessly stuck. London is their home, but English life remains outside their reach. While Scandinavians settle down in a few months, the Swiss, for instance, seem to remain alien as well as "aliens" for ever. I have never met any Swiss people in London who felt satisfied or showed approval. Their provincial minds could not grasp the idea of Empire; they were unable to see London as the centre of a world in itself, as the knot where roads across the earth are tied together. A very material people themselves, they appear unable to look beyond the material side of the English, and a nation of hotel-keepers persists in calling the English a nation of shopkeepers. Marxians without knowing it, they explain every move of English policy as part of a game where oil, coal, and other raw materials are the only pawns. They are blind to that remarkable and naïve idealism of the English, who have ever fought for principles, for abstract policies and the good of humanity, even when victory was bound to bring them profit. They have confused results

with motives, which is a dangerous manner of judging human action. I have known an erudite Swiss who read Dostoievsky and Omar Khayyám in the original with equal facility, and who denied the existence of an English literature.

Where no such psychological barriers exist, the next phase in the foreigner's contact with England is that of assimilation. Here experience varies from person to person, and I can do no more than relate my own untypical journey. In my case, the outward sign of the progress of assimilation has been the language. Its grammar, almost non-existent, presents no obstacle. But in other respects the English language is excruciatingly difficult. There is absolutely no rule for its pronunciation. How is one to tackle the words *rough*, *dough*, *cough*, *plough*, *through*, *thought*? Where does one place the stress when a new word crops up? And what will be the connection between the spelling and the pronunciation of a proper name? Oh, the elusive lisp of the English *th*! The obstinate way in which a final hard *t* and a subsequent initial soft *b* refuse to be assimilated! What infinite struggles and humiliations I had to endure before I could say those simple words "a hot bath" correctly!

The difficulties, however, are gradually overcome. Fluency comes first, and then correctness, until words are spoken without hesitation and thoughts uttered with no more trouble than that felt by the native. His struggle for utterance is often hard enough. For the chasm between language on the one side, and

thought and feeling on the other, can never be bridged.

The first letter written, unaided, in correct English is a rare moment worthy of record. And yet how soon even this achievement seems natural! Self-consciousness has disappeared, and differences are forgotten.

Years have gone by in this wearing process. And while throat and tongue have been kneaded and rendered supple for the new usage, the mind has undergone a similar manipulation. What seemed strange has become familiar, the familiar has been adopted and becomes part of one's self.

A great difficulty, the source of endless depression during the initial stages of assimilation, is the manner in which the English prepare their food. The English, most emphatically, eat to live. Only at Christmas time, when popular journals go to the length of publishing advertisements of patent remedies against indigestion with the mention that the festivities of the season render their use advisable, does food loom first in people's preoccupations. Even this has a special justification. Where better can one gather those heterogeneous elements which fate throws together under the designation of a family than round a large table laden with victuals? Christmas is a family festival: let the dinner-gong call the family together. But when the Christmas meals are digested, the English settle down to a sober year of moderate eating. Their meats, scarcely dressed, form the mainstay of meals where vegetables are only an ornament. Assiduous boiling has deprived

the vegetables of any individual flavour that might struggle for supremacy with that of the all-important animal dish. "We had boiled mutton for lunch", says an Englishman, without dreaming of mentioning whether it was accompanied by turnips or carrots. Who cares?

"The origin of the British Empire", I used to say in my days of bitterness, "must be sought in the fact that Englishmen abroad can never long for the cooking or for the climate of home, and are therefore eminently fitted to establish themselves on any available point of the globe."

The bitterness has disappeared long ago. I have discovered that the meat of England is peerless, for it comes from cattle raised on pastures that have no rival in the world: they are the gift of the very climate which, in unison with all genuine Englishmen, the foreigner curses till he finds his dissatisfaction more tiresome than the climate itself. Why indeed should perfect meat have to share the honours of the table with elaborately prepared vegetables? The time comes when the foreign resident considers Simpson's the ne plus ultra of gastronomic delight. He will know, when he has reached that stage, that he can go no farther along the path of assimilation.

But during the years of struggle with the language of the English, and while the palate becomes accustomed to food without adventitious flavour, the stranger has passed through more difficult, if less obvious, trials. He has come to England after a crossing that could be measured in hours. Yet when

he has arrived, he has found himself among a nation that is farther from his home even than the distant invertebrates of the Russian plains or the jabbering crowds of the Balkan Peninsula. But as acquaintanceship with the English and their ways has grown, so has wonder at the difference. When I came to England, fed on the bourgeois internationalism that found its pride in the expanding cycle of international trade and pointed to the International Postal Union as the supreme achievement of the supernational spirit that was knitting Europe together, I was convinced that nations differed from one another only on points of subsidiary importance. But after a few years I came to the conclusion that the world is inhabited by two species of human beings: mankind and the English. When later I became acquainted with the Irish, and had dealings with the Scots and the Welsh, I grouped them, without approval or disapproval, among the partakers of universal humanity. But the English remained a race apart. As I learned to know them better, my liking increased, and also my desire to become like them, outside humanity, if not above it. But the sense of difference never went. Shylock's words "fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer" may apply to Jew and Gentile under other skies, but I shall always be most cautious before I extend it to an Englishman.

"If you tickle us, do we not laugh?" But would an Englishman laugh? I doubt, in any case, whether

the stereotyped product of Eton and Oxford would. He might conceivably, in the secluded company of other Oxfordised Etonians. But, like Jane Austen, who never liked to describe gentlemen conversing among themselves in the absence of ladies, because she had no personal and direct data on this aspect of life, I must plead ignorance and maintain a discreet silence.

It should not be said that the product of Oxford is untypical. In a nation that cultivates liberty but is indifferent to equality, there is a continual tendency for everyone to accept the standards of those above him. The custom of the leaders of society is at least the standard and aim, if not the actual practice, of those who follow.

But the English *can* laugh. They have even developed the art and acquired the pride of that preternatural laughter without physiological foundation which they call Humour. I could not write Humour with a small letter, for to me it has the awe-inspiring quality of the unknown, of that which is hopelessly out of reach. The Englishman who proclaims his sense of Humour—I never met one who did not, and often he qualified it as exquisite—is to me as the member of a secret society, making a subtle sign which is full of meaning to his associates, but passes my uninitiated understanding.

I believe that laughter is the physiological expression of considerable pleasure, and that a smile is the expression of pleasure less intense, more subtle, and more restrained. But what of the laughter, what of the smile that betokens an Englishman's aroused

sense of Humour? Let me risk a definition of Humour as it strikes me. It is, I think, the capacity possessed by the overwhelming majority of Englishmen to laugh or at least to smile in circumstances where normal human beings curse or cry. An illustration? The soldiers who during the late war went over the top shouting "Marmalade!" No German, no Frenchman could have done that. The Germans sang hymns, the French swore or trembled—without fighting worse for that matter. But the English could laugh at death. You may fight such a people. You may trade with them. But what an undertaking to try and live among them!

There are compensations of course. The comic sense of the ordinary human being is more intense and certainly more tutored than that of the English. Who will doubt this who has observed an English audience at the play and compared it with a foreign audience? The Englishman waits for his laugh. He counts upon it and demands it. If it is not forthcoming, he takes it uninvited. He will laugh in the wrong place, but laugh he will. He will laugh at Mr. Shaw's ferocious slashes at what he holds most sacred, and even in Shakespeare's time he was ready to laugh at jibes that would have made him raise stick or sword had they been spoken outside the theatre.

This nation with its sense of Humour has indeed a distorted sense of the comic.

But look at the Englishman, even when his sense of Humour is not tickled and when he has not congregated with Englishmen in the firm deter-

mination to enjoy himself. He gives his word without signing a bond, and keeps it even when the keeping goes against his dearest interests. The thought of wangling does not arise even in the slumbering depths of his unconscious mind. His self-possession and the decorum of his actions are those of the ancient Roman. He has had the courage to shave off his beard and moustache, that mask which nature gave men to help them hide their emotions, because he holds himself perfectly in hand, and shows no more than he consents to show. He has hidden his feelings so long and so well that he can scarcely utter them when he wishes. Time and generations of repression have made him naturally reserved and shy.

Do the English know they are shy? Their tradespeople, in any case, are aware of it. They heap up specimens of all their wares in the shop-window, because they want to show as much as possible. They know that the prospective buyer will not walk in and ask for the tie of his preference. He will gaze at the shops till he sees what he likes, and then enter and buy in a hurry.

In love they are not different. They will pay their attentions to a young woman for years and study her, until the day of certainty has come, when they will speak the words which, if answered as they hope, bind them almost as fast as marriage itself.

The English indeed never give themselves entirely. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in their conversation. English conversation is full of taboos. *I* and *you* are words that are avoided, or, if pro-

nounced, slurred over with an apology. For the personal element is out of place, and the speaker and his interlocutor must remain immune from interference. Love or, worse still, sex, is known only in the small talk of those who have set out deliberately to be modern and unconventional. Finance is taboo as much almost as personality and affection.

Brilliancy and a show of intellectual gifts are not among the approved ingredients of English conversation. The things of the mind must be kept in their proper place: intelligence is a subordinate. character has the place of honour. At the old universities one gets further with physical prowess than with intelligence and learning. Practice counts in England; theory is cumbersome and treated with distrust. And in conversation it is as in life. People will congregate, even in England. They can forgather and sing hymns, for instance, and the habit has not died out. But communion with the Deity prevents personal contact, and even the English are human enough to crave for the touch of their fellow beings. Wine has lost its function as a blender of temperaments. The pleasures of the table occupy too small a part in the ritual of daily life to be a pretext for meeting other people. So the spoken word must do, and the English talk when they meet.

Now it would appear that conversation from which all that is personal and all that is brilliant has been banned must be extremely dull and unimaginative. If no one is to speak about himself, no one to ask direct questions; if a common ground

must be found where no one feels awkward, no one has to bare himself more than he wishes, more than he feels he decently may, is there anything left to talk about except the weather? Must not the conversation of the English be unutterably boring and reiterative?

This is where the subtle and adaptable genius of the nation plays its part. The Englishman is a being of delicate shades and distinctions. Behind his serene face and reserved manner, he hides the reactions of an appreciative mind. He may not utter them directly, but he loves to pour himself out by implication. Oh, the strange charm of two English people seeking one another, and finding one another through the barrier of conventional talk! No brutal searchlight, as between continentals, to set out the other person in clear-cut outline. There is a pleasant game without set rules, thoughts are thrown out that dance like fairies on the thrilling air of a hot summer's noon, meeting and joining hands for a dance that defies the laws of gravity. An allusion to a half-forgotten admission, a hint that is thrown out, caught up without seeming effort, memories that rustle, dulled chords that faintly vibrate. Echoes re-echo, minds open and admit a new notion which is silently stored up. It is the greatest and finest game the English play—and do they even know that it exists?

Yet the social results of this game are endless. It has done more than many obvious and material factors to shape the mode in which the English have finally arranged to live together. Admittedly as

among southerners, fatally and unavowedly as in England, conversation is what holds people together each time they suspend their function as *homo oeconomicus*. But in this country the spoken word plays so small a part in conversation, while the depths of reminiscence, of common mental possession on which conversation relies are so important, that the pre-requisite for its success must of necessity be common to few people only. Introduce a stranger, and he floats on the oily surface. He does not share the great adventure of diving into the common fund. Each class, each circle within its own class is cut off from every other. Outside each charmed circle, the language of implication loses its meaning.

. . . . .

Speech is more than the last resort of people who have to find a plausible reason for being together. The daily round of domesticity or business also demands expression. Here rules exist, as precise, as binding as if they were codified and imposed by authority. The mentality that has evolved them is the same: it shrinks from exhibition and directness. Yet it does not escape altogether from the dictates of universal humanity. Truth is unbearable, truth is inhuman. Except maybe in Holland, people find no pleasure in speaking the truth. This is because truth is a concept that has been evolved by mankind at an advanced stage of over-ripe development. The notion that things may be presented as they are, or even that things are what they are, cannot be much older than a paltry four or five thousand

years. Instinct prohibits the expression of things as they are, or as they appear to be. Consider the behaviour of the animal in danger. It is compelled to utter itself, and to a two-fold purpose. It wants to frighten off its enemy, and to call its fellows to the rescue. To ensure rescue, the danger must be magnified. It must be lifted from its individual quality and given a generic aspect. The herd too must feel itself endangered. The cry of anguish must therefore be emphasised, exaggerated. But the foe must be kept at bay. If too much fear is shown, he will feel encouraged and hasten to thrust home before assistance arrives. Therefore a brave show of teeth and display of claw has to belie the cry of anguish. Truth is distorted, at the same time by exaggeration and by understatement.

Men have kept this habit among the inheritances they carry in the depths of their unconscious selves. Truth terrifies them, and they all seek to escape from it. The Continental, the Irishman, the American—those, in short, whom I like to call ordinary human beings—overstate. They overstate with vigour, often with art, but without the least self-consciousness, shame, or wish to deceive. They are poets or advertisers. The English have their own way out: they understate. They show, by so doing, a greater deference to truth. Exaggeration is final. It involves credit and honour. It cannot be challenged without offence, withdrawn without indignity. But understatement is prudent. It is honest, too, because it confesses to its own provisional nature. It admits of amendment, addition, and even

embellishment. It is full of unexpectedness, richly stored with reserves of energy.

I had not lived in England for more than a year. One evening, meeting a friend who took me to his house, I was tempted to accept his pressing invitation to dine. But I was expected home, and wanted at least to announce my truancy. "Could I possibly telephone?" I asked my friend. "I am afraid we have no telephone", came the reply. For one moment I failed to understand. Why this fear? Of course, I was not to take this literally: the English speak in parables. My friend meant not fear, but uncertainty. As far as he could guarantee, there was no telephone in the house. But he had been out. On coming home, we had walked at once into his study. We had not explored the living-room, nor the dining-room, nor any of the other closets and apartments. A kind Postmaster-General might have installed the telephone in his absence. This was what my friend meant: "I cannot state with finality that we have no telephone, but, so far as my imperfect realisation of a world which we can only know through experience goes—we have no telephone."

The English never like to go farther than their own experience. They are the empirical race *par excellence*. They distrust theory and hate theories. Except in religion, where their intuition is always ready to look at things from a new angle, they dislike every system of thought. But they keep their religion very much in its own place, and Sunday comes but once a week. In the daily walk of life they are entirely free from the burden of rationality,

which is the bane of continental existence. At the other extreme, the Russians, almost exclusively contemplative, heap up doctrines that dovetail with the perfection of Queen Anne joinery. They postulate the capacity of the human mind to comprehend the universe, unaware that they can only construct a phantastic universe to the scale of their own minds.

Many years ago I knew a Russian who told me solemnly that the two greatest books ever written were the Gospel and Marx's *Kapital*. The Gospel puts down with finality the rules of behaviour of man to man. Marx analyses, in a way that admits of no improvement, the economic function of man. In possession of these two guides, all we have to do is to put their doctrines into practice. Such is the mentality that led to Bolshevism. It sees no distinction between periods and between nations. It is simple and universal—but it does not work. The English, on the other hand, have organised themselves with one thought only: to obtain the best results. They have tried systems of government, until they have found the most suitable. They have never feared experiments, but whenever there has been a choice, they have tried the system nearest that in existence. Transitions have been easy, and the result has been a solidity which exists in no other country.

This rejection of theory has made the English remarkably unconcerned about contradictions. They live in a republic with a king. Their very secular State possesses an Established Church, their Liberals are conservative, their Conservative Party contains

radicals like Lord Henry Bentinck. And how many conservatives were there not in the first Labour Government? The greatest trading nation of the world, they have embraced protection with a frenzy to which their silk-stocking-hunting Customs officers bear witness. Their sport-worshipping universities have produced some of the greatest scholars of the world. In 1916, the General Congress of the Labour Party passed a resolution against conscription and gave its approval to the participation of some of its members in the Government which was applying conscription. The English fill their satiric papers with complaints about taxation, but they pay with alacrity immense sums for the support of their hospitals which, instead of being endowed by the community, have to rely on private benevolence. They do not know the craving for unification and classification which characterises the French. Their complicated community needs clearly codified laws more than any other. Yet they remain satisfied with an antiquated system that puts the ordinary litigant helplessly in the hands of the law expert. Sir Roger Casement is hanged after a reprieve has been made impossible by extra-legal methods, and his disciples are Ministers of the Crown.

But how fresh and ever youthful the minds that remain ready for prudent change, and are untrammelled by the worship of a written constitution! How far the outlook of the people of this country from that of the Americans who consider that the framers of their constitution were guided from above and produced a document which is the last word

of political wisdom! Every change is conceivable, no improvement ruled out, provided the new thing retains the ancient and respected name, and the breach with the past is not too flagrant.

The foreigner treads his way through this strange land, with growing comprehension and increasing approval. Like Alice, he ends by seeing the topsy-turvy logic of it all, and if on occasion he feels ill at ease when invited to the Mad Hatter's tea-party, he understands the story of the Jabberwock in all its unexpected lucidity as well as Alice herself. As he notices differences, he also perceives the superiority which, in many respects, is the undeniable apanage of the people who surround him. He never tires of admiring the sense of order in a nation that is essentially grown up. There are no prohibitions to keep the English off the grass in most of their parks, because the English crowd knows so well how far it may reasonably go. When a crime is committed, the public assists the police in the work of detection with a readiness that shows how fully the real function of the police is understood.

The delight felt at the discovery of the exquisite manners of the English never fades away. They have, indeed, shaken off the trammels of formal and empty courtesy. Their hats are fixed to their heads in a manner which at first makes the foreigner gasp. They do not lift their hats to the policeman who has told them the way, or to a girl who serves them in a shop. Every American religiously uncovers himself in a lift when ladies are present. But the Englishman is twice as quick as the American in offering

his seat to a lady in a public carriage; while the Swiss have never dreamt of the possibility of such a sacrifice. Omnibus conductors, who live in no hope of tips, are at least as helpful as their continental colleagues, and in a much more dignified fashion. The simplified, good-tempered politeness of England is not the monopoly of a single class.

There is one aspect of behaviour where the Continent pays to the English the conscious tribute of imitation. The English themselves are, a little too much perhaps, proudly aware of the superiority of their "table manners". Food counts for little here, but the eating of it receives all the more attention. A code of behaviour, elaborate as the Japanese tea-ceremony, has been evolved in order to give elegance to a function that is not naturally refined. Nowadays in all good continental hotels, and in many continental homes, the English knife-and-fork drill is zealously practised.

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Years pass. The work of observation, approval and assimilation has proceeded steadily. While adapting himself to his new surroundings, the foreigner has gone farther in the study of those incidentals which are a treasured remainder of the past. To him the difference between a knight and a baronet is no longer a mystery, nor are the rules for the appellation of the sons of peers. He smiles at the Italian newspapers who knight every other Englishman and at the French who insist on speaking of "Sir Chamberlain". He visits his native land and wonders. To his

relations he appears an unbearable anglomaniac who refuses to endow the English with national and individual hypocrisy, and who cannot see that the years of the British Empire are numbered. He catches himself speaking of the English as "we", and his own language becomes larded with Anglicisms. The foreign resident has become a denizen.

Then after ten, twelve, or fifteen years the foreigner makes a discovery. Frequently, the experience with his mother tongue gives the first clue to the change. In the struggle of the first years, the English language has displaced the mother tongue. The Frenchman will still speak good French, but his fellow-countrymen catch him making strange constructions, using inappropriate words, or hesitating before he finds the right expression. His French becomes rusty. The Dutchman or the Italian does not fare differently. The written language, at least in the case of educated people, remains unaltered, but there is a tendency for the original language to become almost only written—a kind of book language, a dead language. Then there is a sudden turn. Words come easily once more and naturally, and fluency comes back. Anglicisms die out, and the intervening years of English apprenticeship are without effect. It would be a thrilling discovery if it were allowed to remain isolated. But it is merely a symptom. Anglicisation has reached the point of saturation and the process can go no farther.

The English are most generous in their praise to English-speaking foreigners, but none of them ever fails to spot the foreigner at once, although he may

not be able to say whence the foreigner comes. One begins to wonder where the difference lies. One listens to one's own speech and one finds out. Every single word is pronounced correctly; but the phrase is out of tune. The one remedy, English surroundings during the first fifteen years of his life, is for ever out of the foreigner's reach.

Moreover, the foreigner who has learned English with effort and pain feels for the language a love which no Englishman ever feels. He refuses to use the abominable and saltless verb "commence" while the sound and forceful Saxon "begin" is at his disposal. He avoids the split infinitive, because he has noticed that Labour leaders who delight to use it on the platform never resort to it in natural conversation. When chidden for his purism, he asks to be shown a single instance of a split infinitive in the Authorised Version or the Book of Common Prayer. He studies the rule of "shall" and "will" only to find that few people observe it. And in the end he is told that the very correctness of his English gives him away.

Denationalised and different from the people in his own country, the foreigner nevertheless remains an outsider among the English. The lucidity of vision born of complete acquaintance reveals the sense of difference that remains in the mind of every English person he meets. He talks, and the original sin of self-revelation surges to the surface. He controls the gesticulations of his hands, keeps his face unmoved; but all the time his soul jumps out through his unguarded eye. In conversation,

especially with a single person, the foreigner obtains unexpected results. His warmth thaws the reserve of a lifetime. The Englishman bursts out of his shell, and gives himself away. He speaks with unwonted freedom about his inner life, his longings, his thwarted aspirations. All the repressed essence of universal humanity finds an escape. A radiant, natural man sits on the other corner of the fireside, a man indeed who answers to the description given by Shylock. The hour of parting comes, and with sudden haste the Englishman gathers the spread particles of his individuality, and shyly remarks: "You foreigners have such a way of making a man talk. . . ."

The charm is broken. The Englishman gave himself, but only to an alien, before whom caution was superfluous. A parrot in the bathroom would prevent nobody from getting out of his clothes. An Englishman might disapprove if one undressed one's soul. But foreigners are so different.

II

THE BEST IN THE WORLD

Everybody and everything in England is the best in the world, as Englishmen know and foreigners proclaim. The nature of English patriotism

I ventured the statement in my Introduction that many English people are convinced that nothing but perfection dwells within their shores. Now it is not my intention to give chapter and verse for every assertion I am bold enough to make. These confessions would acquire an immoderate bulk, and the production of an *apparatus criticus* might give rise to the erroneous idea that I am writing an objective study of the English, whereas I aim at nothing higher than at giving an account of my personal vision of the interesting phenomenon which is called the English nation. But I must make an exception in favour of the statement about the estimation in which the English hold themselves. For it concerns nothing less than the nature of English nationalism, which is a permanent feature of the English character, while many of the peculiarities I shall

describe in further chapters are of a more transient nature.

Apart from a relatively small minority, the English are convinced that they are, that they own, and that they produce, all that is best in the world. As the late Earl of Birkenhead has put it, they feel, almost to a man, that they lead the world in matters of moment (*Law, Life and Letters*, II. p. 315). Let me be allowed to present to my readers a little random anthology of judgements by the English people about themselves. It makes no claim to completeness. It would be possible to collect, in one year, enough utterances of the same kind to fill a volume of the Catalogue of the British Museum. No choice or principle has presided over the selection; I have merely shaken out the folder, allowing the scraps to flutter and settle down as they like.

Here is my beloved London! "No town on the face of the earth is more brilliant than London in June", said the *Daily Express* on June 12, 1929, and a few weeks later, on July 3rd, the *Star* informed its readers that "London, as a whole, with its population of nearly 8,000,000, is the healthiest great city in the world, and we may largely account for this by the uniformly good sanitation and water supply". Anyone who has compared the dust-carts of Dutch and German cities with the censers that spread their dubious perfumes and germs through the streets of the English Metropolis will share the enthusiasm of the *Star*, and admire London for remaining, notwithstanding, the healthiest great city in the world.

The *Daily Express*, the most indispensable of daily papers to the student of English character, told us in a leading article on June 10, 1929, that "there is not a landscape in the world we would exchange for England's. Bring back to memory the choicest foreign scenes, and a carpet of bluebells under the soft green of an English copse will outmatch them all". I agree, but my opinion will, for once, seem more convincing than that of an English paper.

After town and land, the inhabitants. By the new American immigration law the British quota has been nearly doubled, while most others have been diminished. The *Sunday Express* of July 7, 1929, commented "It is good for the peace of the world that America permits more of the best—the British —settlers to enjoy her opportunities" The headline of the article from which this passage is quoted ran "America Picks the Best". And explaining, in the *Sunday Times* of the same date, why it is that London is to-day "the chief world-centre and the greatest market" for the sale of Eastern carpets, a writer declared that this is mainly due "to the enterprising knowledge and integrity of British traders". Such men, no doubt, deserve womenfolk worthy of themselves. The diarist of the *Sunday Express* (June 9, 1929) had it on good authority that his sisters are the pick of the womanhood of the world. "I met a man yesterday", he stated, "who has travelled half across the world to find that the greatest wonder of the world is—the Englishwoman! He is the Sultan of Zanzibar." Another column of the same paper relates the interview in more sober terms: "What

do you think the most marvellous sight of England? I asked.—The women; he said simply."

I have always felt that, more than through the eye, the true revelation of a personality comes through his voice. No wonder that Mr. R. E. Jeffrey, formerly of the B.B.C., was able to write in the *Evening Standard* of June 29, 1929: "In my view, the British voice contains the quality which makes it better than any other voice in the world for reproduction."

How wonderful must be the works and achievements of a nation that is thus superior to the rest of mankind! "The Zoo", wrote the diarist of the *Nation* of May 4, 1929, "The Zoo . . . it is I do not doubt, the best, the most humanely conducted, the most scientifically valuable, the most admirable in every respect of all Zoos." "The record of Imperial Airways for safety and regularity is the best in the world", declared the *Star* on June 18, 1929, after a disaster in which six persons lost their lives. And the London Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* of June 26, 1929, said that to the London Combine of Omnibuses and Underground Railways "we owe the brightest posters and gayest underground stations in Europe".

Nor is all this consciousness of vigour and excellence in the performance of practical things a novelty of recent growth. The *Graphic* of March 28, 1874, declared: "Then it must be remembered that England is *par excellence* the land of journalistic energy and special correspondents."

After science and technique, the arts: "England has more beautiful and valuable pictures than

any other country in the world" (*Evening Standard*, June 12, 1929). "The most famous piece of statuary in the world—the elaborate and imposing fountain which was surmounted by the statue of Eros, in Piccadilly Circus" (*Sunday Express*, October 20, 1929).

Let us venture on tiptoe into the sanctuary of the law of England. "Our judicial system is admittedly the finest in the world", wrote Mr. Hugh Holland, the Crossways, Englefield Green, Surrey, in a letter to the Editor of *The Times* (March 27, 1929). Commenting with approval on the acquittal of a boy accused of having stabbed to death a man who had attacked his mother and sister, the *Daily News* of June 28, 1929, boldly declared that "there are in England, as this case illustrates, on the whole the best judges and the most sensible juries in the world".

The humbler servants of such a perfect legal system are, of course, equally the best in the world. To quote the opinion of two experts: "Our secret service is supposed to be the best in the world", declared Mrs. Agatha Christie (*Seven Dials Mystery*, p. 74); while, in an article about his own play *Persons Unknown*, Mr. Edgar Wallace once informed us that "so-called scandals are raked up in order to disparage the greatest police organization in the world".

The Civil Service of such a great nation is equal to the difficult task of serving, and of ruling, the best citizens of the world. In *London Town*, the London County Council staff gazette, for December 1929,

a reviewer declared: "We have, perhaps, the most capable and impartial Civil Service in the world." May I say that I deeply regret this "perhaps". I hasten to provide a corrective, taken from a leading article in that patriotic organ, the *Daily Herald*, of March 24, 1930. "Given the modern state, no fair-minded person can be basically dissatisfied with the British Civil Service. For efficiency and incorruptibility it has no equal in the world." This is better!

The Civil Servants themselves are aware of their proud supremacy. Said Mr. J. J. Pearson in *Supervising*, the official organ of Postal Supervising Officers, of February 1, 1930: "The British Post Office, admittedly the best managed Post Office in the world, has a tradition of many centuries. It has a dignity all its own, and includes in that tradition some of the best characteristics of the British race. The regularity, steadiness, and perseverance with which the many phases of its work are pursued has (*sic*) a striking resemblance to the Army and Navy which have carried British influence to remote corners of the earth." In *Notes*, the organ of the Association of Head Postmasters, for December 1929, Mr. G. H. Basson wrote: "The British Post Office is one of the few wonders of the world as an example of a painstaking, well-run machine. And an inexpensive one." A little farther on he said: 'He (the Head Postmaster) should take the initiative in ascertaining the views of his colleagues (other Civil Servants in the same locality) . . . and in making them realise that in some isolated agricultural district or in some busy industrial town they are

on view, in close contact with the inhabitants, as representatives of the finest Civil Service in the world." And, in the first of a series of talks on employment given to women at the Manchester High School, Mr. K. Broadley declared that "there was no country in the world where the Civil Servant had such a high standard as in this country" (*Manchester Guardian*, March 10, 1930).

Would it be to their early childhood that English Civil Servants owe their peerless qualities? Mr. M. L. Jacks, Head Master of Mill Hill School, stated, according to the *Evening Standard* of December 30, 1927: "There is I believe nothing in the world to match the English home, and no country where the home value is so significant for the life of the people." Whatever the explanation may be, the Civil Servant's is not the only profession or occupation that cannot be rivalled by foreigners. "Englishmen make the best butlers, footmen and grooms in the world," said one of the writers in the Londoner's Diary of the *Evening Standard* of April 2, 1930 (a journalistic feature, by the way, which I have no hesitation in declaring *one* of the best in the world). A few weeks earlier, in the same place (February 22nd) one could read that "the best waiters in the world are the fully qualified English ones". This may be due to the law of supply and demand. The best can only be served by the best, and, as the "Londoner" reported in the *Evening Standard* of March 19th of the same year, on the authority of "a famous *maître d'hôtel*", the "middle-aged Englishman, travelled and moderately wealthy, is the greatest gourmet in

the world, better even than the French." But how can it be that travel should be necessary for the development of this laudable quality? Do the hotels of the English provinces provide moderately wealthy people with no opportunity for developing their palates?

Princes, players and politicians contribute to the collection. It is as though the normally subdued and understating English cannot refrain from hyperbolising as soon as they talk of their country. "We should never forget", said Prince George at Birmingham on October 25, 1929, "that the produce of our home farms and gardens is the best of its kind in the world" (*Daily Mail*, October 26, 1929). "I am sure that the general level of the play of our own girls is the highest in the world. I am certain, from my observation in my own and many other countries, that nationally we are supreme", said Miss Betty Nuthall in the *Evening Standard* of June 20, 1930. Four days later, at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, Mr. Baldwin declared that "the British Press, take it as a whole, is the best, the fairest and the cleanest Press in the world". This was by manner of preface to a vehement attack against a section of this Press.

The Nottingham municipal housing architect, Mr. T. C. Howitt, as reported in the *Nottingham Guardian* of November 14, 1929, told his fellow citizens that "one might feel proud of being an Englishman for, as the Navy controlled the seas, so it might be said that England controlled domestic architecture throughout the world". The *Daily Herald* of April 29, 1930, proudly proclaimed in a

headline that "Britain leads in Fashions", and a correspondent wrote to the *Daily Express*, about the middle of September, that "Englishmen are the most patriotic nation in the world".

The yellow pages of older generations, as we have already noticed, need not be scanned for long if patriotic judgements of quality are required. "The London crowd which, as Mr. Disraeli knew, was the most emotional in the world, is to-day the best conducted, and incomparably the least drunken", wrote T. H. S. Escott in 1897 in *Social Transformations of the Victorian Age*. Fifty pages later he stated that "English women have always had a beauty and a durability of attractiveness unique throughout the world".

But I must stop somewhere. Let me conclude with three "best in the world", each of which deserves a prize as being in turn the most disarming, the most absent-minded, and the most brazen in the world. The most disarming (from an issue of the *Manchester Guardian* in 1929):

British Bun the Best

"British cooks are the best in Europe, according to the party of leading British bakers who returned to London yesterday from a visit to the currant vineyards of Greece on the invitation of the Greek Government. 'We did not find an honest British bun anywhere in Europe', a reporter was informed by Mr. J. H. Merrett, ex-president of the National Association of Master Bakers, Confectioners and Caterers, 'and the Greek and Viennese bakers were

greatly impressed by the Eccles cakes, currant buns, and mince-pies sent out by Britain's champion bakers. We have come back filled with enthusiasm for the prowess of the British baker."

The most absent-minded: "Education . . . taken all round, the English system is the best." For, although this verdict of the *Nation* of May 11, 1929, takes duly into account countries like Rumania, Spain, Afghanistan and Peru, it overlooks Scotland, Scandinavia, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, and one or two others.

The most brazen, from the fearless *Sunday Express* (July 14, 1929): "Let us cure ourselves of the habit of pretending that the English climate is the worst in the world. In fact, it is the best in the world."[1]

Well might Mr. Lloyd Dumas, an Australian journalist, declare to the *Daily News* (June 24, 1929): "You English are so modest." Well might the London Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (January 16, 1930) write: "We are the most self-deprecating people on earth."

No right-minded person would wish to dispute every single statement I have quoted here. If there are some so evidently untrue as to require no comment, if many others appear so sweeping that the element of reason they contain has been obfuscated by clouds of exaggeration, there are others I should myself gladly subscribe to. I have no doubt that if

[1] On March 30, 1930, the *Sunday Express* returned to the subject and wrote that "actually this is the only country in the world where men and women can be out of doors on every day of the year".

he ever reaches the end of this book, the reader will meet several "best in the world" that may compare in their challenging absoluteness with the most emphatic ones I have collected. The really striking fact is that these and similar statements are not only to be found in every journal in Fleet Street and the provinces, but that they are made at every street corner of every town in the kingdom. More amusing still is the cool conviction with which the English believe that foreigners share these assumptions. Every opinion uttered in an unguarded moment, every compliment deliberately paid with the well-known insincerity of the continental conversationalist, is lapped up and printed for the edification of the English reader. "English women they have develop more than any other women", says an anonymous Spaniard. This *boutade* finds immortality in the pages of the *Daily Express* (June 10, 1929). "The best dancers in the world are English girls", declares a foreign choreographer on a business trip to England with the same readiness with which in all probability he will compliment the girls of the next nation he is to visit. But his winged words are caught by the *Manchester Guardian*, which brings them to the breakfast-table of its enlightened readers (June 27, 1929). Such notions obviously correspond to some deep-rooted conviction in the minds of the English, and it is this conviction of obvious supremacy over non-English people which constitutes their very particular brand of patriotism.

For what is the patriotism of the ordinary man but the natural, elemental instinct which compels

him to embrace the interests of the enlarged group to which he belongs? When it has not been cultivated in an artificial manner, patriotism is the conscious enunciation of the word "we" that has superseded the savage and elemental "I". Its most natural expression is the slogan "My country right or wrong". Only when it reaches the highest form of which it is capable does patriotism shed this battle-cry and embrace the nobler ideal which generates the endeavour to make one's country so noble and lofty that it will really only do and wish to do the things that are right. But to the English, no such endeavour appears necessary, and so they have merely modified the primitive slogan and made it into: "My nation, ever right". The conception of course precludes the notion that lessons can be learned abroad, even if it does not altogether stifle the invigorating conviction that there is room for improvement.

This fundamental difference is clearly revealed by a comparison between English patriotism and the brand that flourishes among the French, surely the most vocal exponents of the doctrine of undiluted patriotism. Unlike the English, the Frenchman does not believe in his own superiority over other people. The nationalism of the French, as manifested in their speeches, their songs, their plays, is general and abstract: they speak and talk of France, not of the French. The author of the *Chanson de Roland* made Charlemagne talk of *doulce France*. The dramatist of the nineteenth century who took his inspiration from the *chansons de geste* made his hero declare:

Tout homme a deux pays, le sien et puis la France.

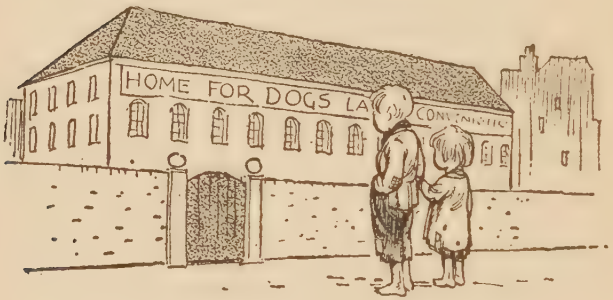
Generations of Frenchmen have believed in the superior mission of *la Grande Nation*, the torch-bearer of the nations of the world, which transcended to an infinite degree the sum total of the individuals of which it consisted, so much so that it readily could open its folds to the Flemings, the Walloons, the Germans, the Italians, and the Hollanders it annexed during the wars of the Revolution, or to the negroes whom it has since called to full citizenship and to the honour of bearing arms for the abstraction which is France. Endowed with such a mission, France could claim special rights in virtue of it. It could demand natural frontiers for itself at the expense of the traditional territory of its neighbours. It can claim special treatment in the settlement of international debts, particular prerogatives when disarmament is discussed. The French can demand what they consider to be the rights of France, but they have no pretensions of superiority in regard to themselves.

Other nations are more modest. To most of the northerners, their country is but a wider family. Elsewhere, the sense of pre-eminence of the Fatherland is inculcated by the suggestion of the printed word, by the school, by castor-oil and cudgel, or by the conjuring up of the bogey of foreign aggression, which is perhaps the best nation-builder of all. But everywhere patriotism implies an instinctive feeling of group-consciousness. Only in England does it rest upon a judgement of quality.

III

THEIR DUMB MASTERS

Animal worship in England. It is caused by a sense of kinship towards speechless creatures. Some surprising contradictions: are they due to sex-repression?



As England's grass is greenest, so its animals are the happiest in the world. Every foreign visitor is struck by the unconcern with which pigeons move among the feet of passers-by. On the Continent such tameness can only be seen in show-places like the Piazza San Marco in Venice. Sparrows in the London parks display an incredible familiarity. England is a paradise for birds. And compare the fat and happy cats of England with their miserable, hunted, hungry and mangy brothers of Italy! What a difference between the bony horses of Spain and the plump and well-groomed horses in this country!

The dumb friends of the English would have no complaints to make if they were suddenly given the power of speech.

The English are eminently conscious of the noble way in which they behave towards animals, and of the superiority which, in this as in many other respects, they display over foreigners. It is a great experience to drive along a road in a Latin country by the side of an Englishwoman. She will sit, a picture of watchful concentration, waiting for the dago driver to be cruel to his horse. Her expectation is usually frustrated, although it is perfectly true that in Latin countries animals come in rank and dignity after human beings. I am not so certain that as much can be said of England. It is probably a fact, at any rate, that in England fewer aged animals live in want than aged people. Once, in a circle of average English men and women, I was remarking on this love for animals that is such a charming feature of the English, but I expressed my regret that they allow themselves to be carried away to extremes which mar their championship of the "inarticulate brutes".

"Let me give you an imaginary and happily improbable illustration", I said. "Suppose an old man sat by the road-side with his dog, and that both were starving. Suppose them to be in such a lonely spot that both must die before help can be fetched. Now let a stranger appear on the scene, who has with him just enough food to keep one of these two beings alive until further supplies can be brought. The one who is not fed is sure to die, but if the ration

is shared it is altogether insufficient, and both must die. I can assure you that if the stranger were a continental he would not even realise the existence of a problem. He would simply feed the man. But do you know that I am not so sure what would happen if the stranger were English? Torn between the two alternatives, he would possibly lose so much precious time in coming to a decision, that eventually both man and dog would be beyond all help."

I was expecting to be accused of exaggeration. To my amazement the sense of the party was nearly unanimous in condemning the action of the hypothetical continental. "Why, of course, one should think of the dog first! The *poor brute* would not even be able to ask for what he wanted."

It is not surprising that in a country where such views are held the most severe penalties visit those who treat animals with cruelty. The surprising thing is rather that there should still be English people whom the law has to punish for being forgetful of their obligations towards their dumb fellow-creatures. Can it be conceived that some time ago two young people had to be heavily fined for killing a mouse by holding it over a candle flame? It is perhaps less dreadful that in 1927 a man had to be convicted for blowing smoke into the face of a dog. That gallant body of fighters of a lost battle, the League Against Smoking, missed a splendid opportunity for demanding equal treatment for human beings and animals. Are not its members continually submitted to the same treatment in public vehicles and places of recreation, without

being afforded the protection which was forthcoming in the case of the ill-treated dog?

It is universally admitted in England that animals are entitled to certain privileges which are withheld from the children of the very poor. I read in the thirty-first annual report of "Our Dumb Friends' League" (p. 50) that "loin-cloths were distributed as usual during the winter months to owners to protect their animals from cold winds and were much appreciated during the bitter weather of 1928–1929". If I am not mistaken, this was also the winter when many children of English miners were unable to go to school because they had neither stockings nor boots. The splendid work for housing homeless dogs, described in the same report, will fill with envy many a social worker who has experience of slums. "The area of the home was extended, and a better fall procured for the drainage. A new lethal house and isolation kennel have been built. Electric light has been introduced and a better system of heating. The kennels have been re-laid with special flooring, and . . . it has been found possible to build brick frontage in almost all the kennels in place of the insanitary and perishable wooden frontages formerly existing." Is it necessary to contrast with this luxury some of the cases of human housing as they exist in Bloomsbury, within a stone's throw of the place where I am writing, where there is no isolation for the sick unless the community intervenes because it judges them dangerous to itself, and where childbirth takes place in a promiscuity which might grace the pages of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*? Conditions pre-

vail in the heart of London which make the spectator wonder whether the lethal chambers of the dogs' home would not be more in their place in some of the mews that have not yet been converted into flats for the Intelligentsia.

When I think of the favoured position of animals in England, I am not sure that each time I use the hard hand to teach the principles of honesty to a kitten I am not infringing the law. The way in which a lady of my acquaintance one day rebuked me because I removed my cat from an arm-chair in which I wanted to sit down nearly convinced me that I was unworthy of the custody of this quadruped. For several days I trembled at each knock at the door, fully expecting the visit of an inspector of the R.S.P.C.A.

"Do you not realise", asked my friend, "that cats are not like dogs or like people? They have their own idiosyncracies. Their motives escape us, but they are not therefore unreasonable. If puss sleeps in this chair, she must have for doing so a reason which eludes us. If by your brutal intervention you prevent this cat from fulfilling its purpose, you may occasion an uneasiness of mind which will react upon its further outlook on life and cause it intense suffering!"—"I can understand the feelings of the cat", I replied, "because they correspond to what I have experienced when, not out of gallantry, but out of timid acceptance of public opinion, I have offered my seat to a healthy young girl in an underground railway carriage."

My reply was somewhat beside the point. After

all, the idea of having a cat that suffers from complexes one has wilfully caused is rather disquieting. It is for a similar reason that the English are more than averse to seeing trained domestic animals displayed. Unlike the training of wild animals, teaching a horse or a cat to perform tricks entails no cruelty. The better informed among the opponents of the display of trained animals no longer emphasise the aspect of physical cruelty. Their arguments are mainly based upon the fact that to compel an animal to appear before the public and perform at the word of command jangles upon its nerves. A continental might observe that stage fright is an emotion also known to human beings. Ought not all public performances to be abolished on that score? And are not examinations rather cruel to candidates?

Incredible is the activity of the friends of animals in England. Numerous prosecutions are initiated by the various societies for the protection of animals every year, and some of them for remarkable reasons. In March, 1928, a farmer was prosecuted because he had killed several cows in the presence of each other, thereby causing them to suffer both physically and *mentally*. He was acquitted, for the severe standards of the R.S.P.C.A. are not yet universally admitted by the magistrature. It would seem, moreover, that the society's zeal sometimes outruns discretion. According to the Minehead correspondent of the *Morning Post* (June 8, 1929) Mr. W. A. Leach, a leading member of the Somerset Farmers' Union, strongly protested against the methods of the R.S.P.C.A. in working up cases

against farmers for alleged cruelty to animals, when answering a summons for the supposed ill-treatment of a horse that was considered unfit for work by the Society's inspector, although the owner held a certificate from his own veterinary surgeon who stated that the animal was sound.

The letter to the Editor of one's favourite paper, that excellent safety-valve for angry colonels, unknown authors, housewives fleeced by unscrupulous tradesmen, and middle-aged gentlemen who suffer from attacks of xenophobia, does excellent service in the permanent national campaign for pillorying attempts to treat animals without due reverence. Mr. Percy A. Scholes parodied these letters in an amusing way, when in the *Observer* of December 25, 1927, he wrote to the Editor in the following terms:

> Surely it was with disgust that many of your readers learnt from one of your reviewers last Sunday of the heartless advice of F. Morton Shand in his *Book of Food*. Are we yet civilized when a respectable London publisher can issue a book advising that "tench, like lampreys, should be cooked alive"? On a day sanctified to the satisfaction of the stomach I appeal for humanity.

It is the mentality thus parodied which has led people to protest against the nursery-rhyme about the four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie, unmindful of the fact that when the pie was opened the birds began to sing, which either proves that the baking cannot have been very thorough, or else that the specific nature of these particular blackbirds made them immune from ill-treatment.

The number of societies whose task it is to keep alive the notion that animals have higher rights than English people is considerable. There are the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Our Dumb Friends' League, the National Equine Defence League, the Council of Justice to Animals, the National Canine Defence League, which has founded a club exclusively for dogs known as "The Select Society of Ye Jolly Old Dogs", the Pit Ponies Protection Society, the Performing and Captive Animals Defence League, and many others. The various Societies against vivisection are somewhat different in scope: they might be called anthropocentric, in so far as many of their members are concerned principally with the fact that artificial interference with nature causes greater harm than good. Some even hold the belief that a disease, avoided by inoculation in one's present incarnation, is bound to visit one in the next, and in a more malignant form. Others, however, prefer to avoid the causing of suffering to animals rather than allow the alleviation of suffering among human beings which might be its result. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds belongs, of course, to an altogether different category. Its aims are aesthetic and scientific: avowedly or not, it is interested in birds because they embellish the lives of men.

In any conversation I have ever had with English people upon the subject, I have been told that it was their very inarticulateness which made animals so appealing: "Why, the poor brutes are not even able to speak for themselves!" There lies the secret.

The English feel infinitely nearer the inarticulate animal than do normal human beings. In this country understatement and silence have become second nature as a result of a long and deliberate training. But if silence is fine—compare a vociferating and gesticulating Frenchman in anger to a dignified Englishman who grins and bears his troubles—it is nevertheless not an attitude that pays. In their own country, the English see the plums of trade and of administration fall into the mouths of Scots and of Welshmen. It has taken them generations before they bethought themselves of the simple remedy of Dominion Home Rule in order to be rid at last of those Irish who were so very much in the way. In foreign affairs, the English are even more shockingly exploited. To a foreigner who loves them, it is indeed a heart-rending spectacle to see them always the underdog, always the deceived party, always the cat's-paw of scheming adventurers.

Take the greatest collective experience of the English in the course of a century, the war of 1914–1918, when they poured out blood and treasure without stint. What profit did it bring them? The people themselves, the idealistic, unselfish young men who enlisted in their thousands, went to fight in order to save brave little Belgium. But brave little Belgium emerged from the war enlarged with German territory, with ambitions directed towards its northern neighbour, a danger to that European peace which is such a vital pre-requisite for the safety of Greater England. Little Belgium was the first country to recover its prosperity after the war,

while England is still paying war-tribute to America, and straining every nerve in the struggle against unemployment.

The Government of England went to war for realistic reasons: Germany endangered the balance of Europe, in particular along the coast of the Low Countries which is opposite the most vulnerable part of the sea-board of England. According to a tradition of more than three hundred years' standing, England never allows this coast to fall into the hands of the dominant military power on the Continent. As a result of the war, the German threat to the equilibrium of Europe has been conjured, and now France, whom the English helped to conquer teutonic Alsace, has become the paramount military power. But she occupies this same coast, for Belgium, with her large and well-organized army that is part of the French military organization, is independent only in name. The security of England, the heart of the British Empire, is further endangered by the growth of an immense and unequalled air force on the other side of the Channel, which France, while she pleaded poverty and extracted from England a debt settlement Buddhistic in its self-denial, has constructed with labour cheapened by monetary inflation. And if one accepted the view that behind the Government of England there were, in 1914, occult powers that willed the war with Germany in order to destroy the trade of a competitor, one would not find them more successful. Germany is no longer a threat, but New York is worse than a danger, and Wall Street has eclipsed

Threadneedle Street. As for the German overseas empire, it has mainly gone to Afrikanders, Australians and other foreigners.

After the war, the English mounted guard along the Rhine in the service of French imperialism. They have, at the bidding of a Foreign Secretary who loved their traditional rival like a woman, performed the goose-step under the windows of Marianne. The English themselves are perfectly aware of the fact that foreigners usually exploit them. During the war one heard complaints about the cleverness of the enemy that might have made one believe the English were helpless children who could not look after themselves. And to-day they still like to think of themselves as helpless and defenceless beings. The days of the beefy John Bull who challenged the four corners of the world are gone. Now the favourite representation of the Englishman is Strube's little man in the *Daily Express* and Poy's John Citizen in the *Evening News*, pathetic and timorous homunculi who scurry and scuttle away from politicians, officials and tax-gatherers.

Those among the English who shake off the national shyness and meekness have an easy game. Hotel-keepers and landladies reign unchallenged among chaos, discomfort and bad cooking. Selfish train passengers, road-hogs and the postal authorities ride rough-shod over the prostrate bodies of their victims. Is it a wonder that, in the midst of their silent torture, the English stretch out a comradely hand towards their dumb friends?

Were I a judge instead of a spectator, I should

take the view that the number of possible human actions is limited. I should declare that, like the brain of Sherlock Holmes, in which there was no room for the non-utilitarian notion that the earth revolves round the sun, a community still in need of a National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has no place for animal-worship. To this any Englishman would reply, and quite rightly, that there never can be excess of gentleness, and that the practice of kindness to animals may in due course engender the practice of kindness to human beings.

This timely reminder would come most appropriately, for without it, one might be tempted to further moralising. The foreigner whose mind does not always recoil from probing into hallowed tradition might feel inclined to question certain proceedings towards animals which do not tally with the usual professions of the English. He might ask what is the place of fox-hunting and other blood-sports in the English scheme of things. He might wonder why a farmer can be fined for keeping a pig with a broken leg, while the unmentionable cruelties that accompany stag-hunting, or the disgusting custom of blooding that enlivens the wasteful method by which English ladies and gentlemen kill foxes is tolerated, and even surrounded with a halo of romance. He may even pronounce the word which, to the unenlightened foreigner, explains all the mysteries of England: hypocrisy. But does not Fénelon tell us that hypocrisy is the homage paid by vice to virtue? It is the conscious

assumption of the appearance of virtue by the unvirtuous, and must therefore have been preceded by a deliberate decision of the intellect. Which goes to prove that unenlightened foreigners do not know the English.

The foreign resident does not permit himself such elementary judgements. He knows that nothing that is not complex will satisfactorily explain what pertains to the English. For this reason he will reject any attempt to explain away blood-sports by the fact that they are the privilege of the better class, and that traditionalist England dare not touch such privileges. The English are traditionalists where names are concerned, not when they tackle things. The upper classes are not exempt from bearing their burden: they died during the war with greater alacrity, if possible, than their social inferiors, and they pay without blenching the death duties whose enforcement their representatives in the House of Lords were powerless to prevent from being imposed upon them. Besides, it is a mistake to believe that the supporters of blood-sports are necessarily "gentlemen". We know for instance how the people of Minehead treat the critics of stag-hunting. It may be remembered that, on February 27, 1929, "sportsmen" pelted a meeting of the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports, organised at Bicester, with over-ripe eggs, oranges, and other missiles. As an explanation of the survival of blood-sports, traditionalism or aristocracy is not more satisfactory than the belief that such sports are necessary in order to ensure a supply of horses

for dragging the tanks, whippets and tractors of the mechanised army of the future.

A theory that presents more attraction is that of psychological compensation. The maudlin attitude adopted by the English towards the dumb friends whom they have turned into their dumb masters is offset by a craving for power over them in another direction. Do the English find this compensation in the special form of sadism which is provided by blood-sports?

The general attitude of the English towards animals may be due to an imaginative projection of their own being into the animal-world. But why deny the fact that hunting is an agreeable and unique pastime? If only as an opportunity for enjoying the country-side—and what country-side equals the perfect, moving, and infinitely satisfying land of the English?—it is unrivalled. The follower starts out as a disembodied spirit, with the world before him, into the autumn haze or the crispness of winter; the Hunt knows no boundaries and no fences except those its horses will not take. It rushes over one vast communal world, where private property is for a brief moment abolished, where motion and speed are all that matters. The fascination of hunting is sufficient to explain its existence.

The enthusiastic practice of blood-sports by a portion of the English community only appears incongruous in the eyes of foreigners whose minds are warped by their morbid passion for logic, and who cannot reconcile the apostolic activities of

English people for the abolition of bull-fights in Spain and of pigeon-shooting at Monte Carlo with their ruthless treatment of stags, hinds, foxes, otters and hares (or with their cruelty to horses at the Grand National). The noblemen who divide their time between the hunting-field and branch meetings of the R.S.P.C.A. over which they preside have no morbid passions, least of all for logic. The public schools of England breed no Hamlets.

IV

REPRESSIONS

Misrepresentations abroad. The remarkable virtue of Englishmen. Prurience, husbands, and the subdued voice of desire. The English as adolescents. Men and women. The author's views on women show that he is not in harmony with his own time

Do the English know that the majority of Frenchmen, although too polite to tell them so, are convinced that the percentage of homosexuals in England is unusually high? Are they aware that on the Continent English women are supposed to be physically frigid, but morally perverse and sadistic? Let those who doubt learn foreign languages and acquire the confidence of continentals by shedding their native reserve which is usually taken for *morgue*. A few friendly chats in any café in Paris or in the provinces,

or a couple of visits to a cabaret frequented by Frenchmen will soon enlighten them.

The explanation generally given has a flavour so alien to the complicated mind of the English that it cannot be qualified in their language. The French themselves would call it *simpliste*. "You continually meet Englishmen of thirty, and even older, who have never had an affair with a woman", the Frenchman will say. "How do you think they get through life?" For self-control has not been taught to the young men of France. In days more respectable the French believed that suicides dropped into the Thames like flies, because life was unbearable to the English. Nowadays, the French are convinced that the English have found ways to make the burden tolerable.

In Germany homosexuals male and female can enrol in the nation-wide Union which furthers their interests. The Union publishes several periodicals, has its club-house, and its directory. The members sing an anthem of their own, called "Lilac Nights" which begins with the words: "We who are different". We may be sure that homosexuality is not prevalent to an abnormally large extent in Germany.

In England, on the other hand, the path of the unorthodox in matters of sex is made uneasy and arduous, at least if they are men. For lesbianism is non-existent, in the eyes of English law, although the Lord Chamberlain prohibits the public performance of *La Prisonnière*, a play which draws attention to some of its disastrous effects. In the case of men the law visits their sin with a severity which

is, usually, only applied to offences against property. Rather than allow them to escape through meshes that are too wide, the authorities hunt them with a net of so fine a texture that it catches the innocent with the guilty. My advice to foreign visitors has always been not to enter Hyde Park after dusk unless in groups that keep carefully together, are always composed of odd numbers, and contain members of both sexes. The somewhat sensational prosecutions for alleged heterosexual offences in Hyde Park that have taken place in the course of recent years have not sufficed to restore full respectability to this agreeable resort.

Incidentally, the English system leaves the door wide open to blackmail. This particularly odious form of crime could so easily be avoided by treating all offences against morality in the same manner. Only two elements are really material in the punishment of sexual offences. The first is the question whether there is a victim who has suffered in consequence of the offence, either owing to tender age or as a result of violence. The second is the question whether the commission of the act has in any way offended public morality. Public morality is the only sound criterion of all penal laws. The moralists can attempt to modify and improve public morality. Meanwhile, if public morality condemns an action, even if it be the wearing of Oxford trousers, the law is entitled to prohibit this action. In a negative form, this principle has received recognition in the laws which forbid the commission of an act likely to lead to a breach of the peace.

We have been able to establish, on the one hand, a striking preoccupation in the mind of the public authorities with the need for an unrelenting fight against homosexuality, and on the other, an aprioristic conviction among continentals, especially, but not only, among French people, that the English are a sexually unorthodox nation. In how far may we conclude therefrom that there really is a prevalence of homosexuality in England? Only statistics could finally answer this question.

Of one thing there can be no doubt: the English suffer from immense repressions which reveal themselves at every turn of the road. Why is it that a paper can publish an article on literary movements in Spain under the heading "Spanish Letters", while a similar study about France must of necessity go under some such title as "Life and Letters in France"? Why are there scores of combinations of words, some of which Mr. Graves has catalogued in his witty essay on "The Future of Swearing", which a newspaper or periodical must avoid at all costs? It is because any slip will bring by the next mail a sheaf of letters from anonymous beings who will revel in it and explain at length the cabalistic sense of the words passed by an unsuspecting sub-editor.

Cloaked under expressions of virtuous indignation, this interest in matters of sex is displayed in certain sections of the popular Press in a manner and to an extent which can only be described as morbid. The process may be studied in the columns of more than one daily paper. Is there, at some

exhibition, a picture which shows an unusual degree of frankness, a nude, or a bathing scene? Immediately the guardians of public morality swoop down upon it with a whoop of triumph, reproduce it in their columns, advertise the place where it can be seen, and pillory the artist and the exhibitors with eloquent indignation. If anything of an unsavoury nature transpires in the courts of law, or through the exaggerated publicity by which English life tries to restore the natural balance upset by inhuman reticence, these papers are at once hot on the trail. In the days when the journalistic profession had not yet revolted against the extensive reporting of divorce cases, the most intimate details of conjugality were spread out before the reader. The condition of a hymen would become the subject of public debate, and the alleged impotence of a husband the concern of millions of his fellow citizens.

There still are Sunday papers of the kind that caters for people who are innocent of any other reading. They give a synopsis of all the gruesome and unsavoury events of the week, with a special display of matters sexual. I know of a weekly paper run on pseudo-medical lines which exhibits such posters as "A Wife's Weekly Nightmare", "The Results of Incontinence", "An Ignorant Bride", "Physical Disabilities in Wives, their Cause and Cure", "Pleasures a Pure Girl Misses". The paper thrives, but it is not bought by people who wish for guidance in order to fight their passions.

A censorship that is erratic in its methods and feminine in its vagaries can only exist among people

whose sexual life is not wholesome. A nation which deems it to be an indictable misdemeanour to publish any obscene matter, and which considers it to be the test of obscenity that the matter complained of "tends to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to immoral influences" is a nation which confesses itself liable to temptation in a way which corresponds but little with the standards of chastity it professes to uphold. Persons who tour the sea-board in summer in order to detect excess of freedom among bathers must surely be suffering from a lack of psychological equilibrium.

There is something about the attitude of the average Englishman towards sex which savours of the most unhappy period in the life of every civilised man. He is an age-long adolescent. Adolescence is a problem which civilised mankind has yet to solve. During the years of puberty the ordinary young man is tortured by curiosities which are stone-walled by parents and schoolmasters, and by desires which remain frustrated because society is genuinely bewildered by them. The Englishman is forever full of curiosities and thwarted urges.

I once received a visit from a middle-aged solicitor, who, at the end of the conversation, carefully edged his way behind my secretary's back for the express purpose of pointing at my French yellow-backs with a wink and a leer that sent a painful shudder down my spine. To this very typical Englishman, my innocent collection of Anatole France and Taine and my cheap editions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French classics represented a naughty,

alluring and forbidden world; their chrome pre-war covers hid the kind of thing one does not mention to "the wife".

The English are sex-starved. They are reluctant to marry, and the chaste bachelor of thirty who so puzzles French observers is not a myth. It has taken me years of investigation to become convinced of the generally accepted fact that among people of the lower middle-class coitus normally takes place only once a week and that a special night of the week is set aside for this rite. I know a social worker in a welfare centre who advises working men to exercise birth-control by self-restraint, and tells them that they need not go to their wives *every* Saturday night. This saying reveals the mentality of the middle-class social worker rather than that of his working-class victim. Of the English working-man I shall have more to say at a later stage.

It cannot be argued that the low sexual activity of the English corresponds to a lower ebb of need and desire. The English are fine, attractive, manly creatures, and they are emphatically not under-sexed. The physical life of their men shows no potential difference from that of other men. Every man has desire. Every married man is either unfaithful, or wishes he were, or wants to be without being aware of his desires. This applies to the men of England as well as to those on the Continent, but the proportion of men who belong to each respective category is different in this country from what it is elsewhere.

Sex in England is considered a sinful thing, and

is taboo. Possessing much character and strength of mind, Englishmen will be less liable to become unfaithful husbands. Moreover, public opinion imposes a much heavier penalty on adultery in England than abroad, and public opinion matters enormously to a people which attaches more importance to form than to content. Husbands who, in other circumstances and in other countries, would certainly commit adultery, here merely wish to do so. Where the admission of inclinations and desires that are considered reprehensible is difficult, owing to the reserve and taciturnity of the people, there is further an inevitable tendency to ignore the depth of passion within oneself, to repress and bury it in the unconscious mind. There, of course, it plays havoc with the personality.

The attitude of the English towards animals, oscillating between extremes of maudlin sentimentality and cruel blood-thirstiness, is a revealing feature of the unrest they harbour within themselves. The same can be said of their shyness, of their frequent difficulty in coping with their own language, of their love for the death-penalty and of the harshness of their penal code in general. The passionate defence of flagellation in its various forms, periodically put forward by well-meaning people, is equally revealing. I know English people of my own age whose mother used to keep a thin, flexible cane with which to chastise them, not in a moment of forgivable anger, but after a quietly delivered admonition. The child was sent to fetch the instrument of torture from the cupboard upstairs. When

the punishment had been inflicted, there was a moment of brusque unclinching of the mother's innocently perverted nerves, and, reciting the ritual phrase: "it hurts me more than it hurts you", the mother waited for a filial kiss of peace.

But everything in sex-repression is not equally unpleasant nor equally dangerous. Considered from the social-aesthetic point of view, the manner in which the English have tried to solve the problem of sex presents distinct advantages. It is highly dignified. Consider the gynaecocracy which is called France. There every man is conscious of his desires and has little hesitation in admitting them. Women are on a pinnacle, and rule the home and the state. No Frenchman would have the impudence to pay his wife a dress allowance or household money; Madame holds the strings of the purse. In the state her influence is so considerable that only unsatisfied virgins—and none but those who wish to be belong to their number in France—or mannish women, have ever thought of asking for the vote.

The English admission of equality of the sexes before the law is finer. It does not alter the fact that there is no sex equality before nature, but it recognises the human inability to weigh human values. Women are free and respected in England. Compare their lot with that of women in Italy where a crypto-harem system still survives, and where the men take loathsome liberties with unescorted women who are not of their own race. The Germans are solving the problem in the right way by abolishing the dual standard in the sense of equal freedom for both sexes.

The English have gone the other way and sought equality in common restraint.

There always remains the possibility of sublimating one's passions. Art and the cult of beauty may not be a form of sublimation generally practised in England. But there is sport, though to an extent more limited than is generally imagined, and business. It is absurd to accuse the English of being worshippers of Mammon. If they flock to their offices, it is merely in order to forget themselves. Then there are hobbies. And even where there is no sublimation, the neurosis which results from repression need not inevitably adopt distressing forms. The attractive wistfulness of so many Englishmen is in all probability due to repression. It is the manifestation of suffering which has not become acutely unbearable. Nonsense-poetry like that of Lear and of Lewis Carroll could not have been written with such beautiful perfection by a nation that possessed a complete psychological balance.

Nor is the possibility of giving way to desire altogether excluded. Englishmen can sin, even though they do it sadly, and cry like carpenters and walruses over the oysters they are eating. Brighton remains, and London for those who do not live there, and Paris for those who do. People who use these opportunities, however, usually upset the balance of their souls by remorse and by the necessity for dissimulation.

The unusual way in which prostitution is dealt with in this country is a symptom of the national ostrich policy in sexual affairs. The law forbids the

use of premises for disorderly or immoral purposes, but it cannot prevent a woman being a prostitute. Neither is prostitution in any way allowed, admitted, regulated or controlled. Only its preliminaries at one end, and its organised commercialisation at the other, come under the notice of the law. Even "soliciting" is not, at present, forbidden. But the ineradicable and eternal votaries of the non-recognised profession are not allowed to annoy passers-by while touting for their clientele. The decision of the subtle question as to whether at any given moment they have made a nuisance of themselves is left to young men from the country and to Catholic Irish ex-soldiers, subtle psychologists who qualify for their job by the possession of definite height and chest measurements.

So far, I have mainly paid attention to the men of England. From the point of view of national differences, there would be no need to study Englishwomen separately. They do not differ appreciably from other women. But one cannot exaggerate the extent to which women differ from men, although in these days of theoretical sex-equality, the difference is too often ignored. Women suffer from all the frailties and weaknesses that afflict men, but furthermore they have their own miseries and sufferings, which put an entirely different complexion upon their existence. Childbirth with its pains and its dangers is only one of them. The unrelenting rhythm of their lives, which introduces into the existence of even the most gifted of them an element of fatality, and at the same time of unreliability, unnerves every effort they make to cope with

practical things on a basis of complete equality with men. Herein lies the fundamental difference; subject to the harshness, the ruthlessness, and what our anthropomorphic minds would call the unfairness of nature, in a way which is only known to men when they are ailing, women will be inclined to seek in nature the cause of all that is wrong with life, while men will imagine that the wrongs that exist are the result of the way in which they themselves have organised existence.

Men aim at social improvement; women, less sanguine, confine themselves to the endeavour of frustrating the pernicious scheme of things in its application to their own personal case and to the case of the very few who are dear to them. Women are in tendency individualistic and realistic, while men are social and idealistic. Women are in contact with the essence of things, men have chosen for their part the man-made form, the social shell of life. While men are the flowers of the race, its evanescent hour of beauty, women are the human race itself. This is why women do not differ from nation to nation, or from period to period. Their ethics, or rather, their absence of ethics, is universal.[1]

[1] In *The Bench and Bar of England* (1919, p. 69) J. A. Strahan confirms this view from his own experience. "Women", he says, "I have usually found much better witnesses of what they have seen than men. Men reflect and draw inferences from what they have seen, and are apt to mix in their evidence what they surmise must have happened with what they actually saw happening; women usually tell just what they saw. Their evidence, however, is reliable only so long as their passions

I once propounded my views about the universal womanhood of Englishwomen to a friend of mine, a foreigner of great sense and deep sensitiveness on whose opinions I place much store. "You generalise", said my friend, generalising upon his own particular disappointment. "There is one difference between Englishwomen and other women, which singularises them as much as their men are distinguished from other men. All women sell their body to the highest bidder. But while continental women keep to the bargain, Englishwomen don't. They pay the price only when hard-pressed, with reluctance and as though bestowing a favour." I felt, and I continue to feel even more strongly as my critic's words have sunk deeper into me, that our minds are contingent upon our lives, and that subjectiveness must remain the only honest form of expression. Truth is out of our reach. We see it through our temperaments, which are determined by our lives. Subjectiveness is nearer to full consciousness because it realises and admits that it stands one remove farther from truth than objectiveness fancies itself to be.

To my friend I could only make this rejoinder: life has given me the temperament which leads me to believe that whereas the desire of men goes out and searches, the desire of women normally waits till it is sought out and kindled. Men desire the woman of their choice, and women reward with their

are not involved: when love of their husband or children, or hatred of their neighbour enters into the question, not a word they utter can be trusted. They have no consciences."

desire the man who has chosen them. Slow in being roused, they are as intermittent in their passion as they can be, for a brief moment, tempestuous. Life is not logical, or if it be, its logic aims at procreation. Pleasure and appeasement, harmony and happiness are merely its afterthoughts. Frigidity, exceptional among Englishwomen as it is among foreign women, is due to the same cause in both: the clumsiness of the male or the aridity of the woman's heart.

Englishwomen cannot be said to possess characteristics which are inherently different from those of women of other nations. But they have to cope with the entirely exceptional phenomenon which is the manhood of England. Their reaction to this phenomenon is simplified by one important factor. In sex relations women are the receptive element, they are courted and hunted. And in the mating game, the primeval part assigned to them has always been that of a pretended indifference which slowly thaws under the pressing insistence of the male. Simulation is natural to them, and does not therefore produce in their psychology the upheaval which pretence has caused in the souls of Englishmen.

There is another important difference. Whatever one school of anthropologists may tell us about the private life of anthropoid apes, man is polygamous, woman monogamous. This is in accordance with the scheme of nature. The male can fructify many wombs, while the female is slowly fulfilling the laborious process of gestation and parturition for which she has needed the assistance of only one

male. Messalinas are exceptions. A woman needs only one partner, and even her love for him is soon eclipsed by that which is inspired by her offspring. Mated Englishwomen are therefore as a rule contented. The intermittence of feminine desire frequently enables them to be satisfied in wedlock with an Englishman.

No doubt the wide-spread ignorance of the technique of love among average Englishmen, which results from the taboo on direct sex-talk and the consequent lack of the oral tradition that is so useful to Continentals and Asiatics, cannot be conducive to conjugal felicity. Maternity, however, offers the opportunity of a partial sublimation.

An incidental complication is the excess of women over men in England, with the resultant abundance of unnatural virginities. Here, as in the case of married women, there is a certain amount of sex starvation, but this has not altogether the same results as repression, because those who suffer from starvation do not usually hide the fact from themselves, and knowledge of one's psychological trouble is half the cure.

There is a conviction among continentals that Englishwomen are frigid, and more than a suspicion that their instincts seek outlets through strange deviations. The German author Hans Heinz Ewers has written a short story about an Englishwoman who makes her husband miserable by her total indifference. The hero of the story discovers that she revels in purely intellectual and nervous orgies of vicarious sadism by reading in ancient books

ghastly descriptions of torture, mangling and bloodshed. Ewers seems to imply that this sombre pathological case is typical. I think he is utterly mistaken.

Unmarried women in England have certainly a greater fear of motherhood than women abroad. This may be due merely to the lack of knowledge of contraceptives. The practices which are called by the various names of petting, cuddling, and flirtation, and which are said to be so prevalent in the United States of America, are also largely in evidence in England, because Englishwomen know that they can go very far with an Englishman without running the risk that he will lose his head.

In *Die Sexuelle Frage* Forel defines flirtation as including "all those expressions of the sexual instinct of one individual towards another individual which excite the other's sexual instinct, coitus being always excepted". He then proceeds, in the summary given by Havelock Ellis in Vol. VI of his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, to say that "most usually the process is that voluptuous contact and reverie which, in English slang, is called 'spooning'. From first to last there need not be any explicit explanations, proposals, or declarations on either side, and neither party is committed to any relationship with the other beyond the period devoted to *flirtage*." Havelock Ellis then continues as follows: "While flirtation in its natural form—though not in the perverted form of *flirtage*—has sound justification, alike as a method of testing a lover and of acquiring some small part of the art of love, it remains an altogether inadequate

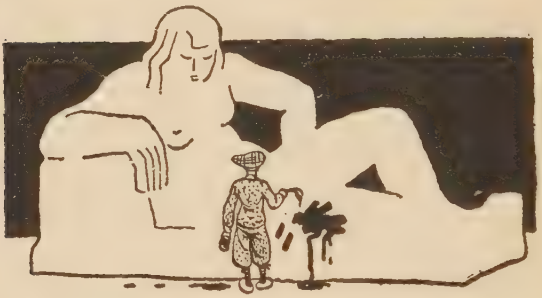
preparation for love. This is sufficiently shown by the frequent inaptitude for the art of love, and even for the mere physical act of love, so frequently manifested both by men and women in the countries where flirtation most flourishes."

The allegations of unnatural coolness made about Englishwomen result mainly from the impression created by the ring of defences with which nineteenth-century Englishmen have surrounded their womenfolk. In a country where the uncorroborated testimony of a hysterical girl is accepted by magistrates, where it is positively dangerous for a man to travel alone in a railway compartment with a woman he does not know, and where the bizarrest notions are held about what is permissible in addressing or even in looking at people one passes in the street, women are sufficiently kept at arm's length to make an uninformed spectator believe that they are out of reach. They may be, but on the evidence available to occasional visitors to this country, the case cannot be held to be proven.

V

NOT TOO CLEVER!

Intelligence a social sin. Art at a discount



In the smoking-room of an hotel on the Lungarno at Florence, a middle-aged Englishman with a worried look leaned over towards me. "Excuse me", he whispered, "but do tell me where the Po is. I always understood Florence was on the River Po."

I have frequently noticed that the Masters of the World have little geography. I suppose that it matters not where one's possessions are when one knows that there is no corner of the globe where some of them cannot be found. If the gentleman who interpellated me was looking for the River Po in Florence, this gap in his mental equipment had not prevented him, as I subsequently learned, from becoming the owner of several large printing works, where proof-reading was done by people whose

minds were free from the cares of administration and who had therefore found time to learn those unimportant details which are stored up in atlases.

The geography book of distant schooldays, I was told, was to blame. I am quite willing to believe it, for I do not think that even to-day geography is dear to the hearts of those who arrange school curriculums in England. I came across a boy fresh from a London County Council School who thought that the capital of Greece was Rome, and that Lisbon was in Spain. Another boy with the same educational standard failed to point out Yorkshire on a large-scale map of England. And I have looked at some of the books that are now being used in English schools. If their doctrine is not quite that of Jules Verne's Australian schoolboy, who thought France was an English province and said the moon did not yet belong to England but would be annexed shortly, they do nevertheless show a decided aloofness from exactitude. Continentals garble their school books, but they at least do it with a purpose.

In his book *Romantic Java*, Mr. H. S. Banner tells us that "week after week harassed postal officials in China, India, Burma, Siam, and even Palestine, are wishing dead, if not themselves, at least the English teachers of elementary geography, as they re-address piles of business letters intended for Java". Indeed knowledge, and not only knowledge of geography, is at a discount in England. Except in specialised educational circles, scant regard is paid to the value of a well-trained and well-furnished brain. Among English Conservatives there still

lingers an emphatic distrust of popular education. It is always the first object on which Conservative Governments retrench, and they count with reluctance the thousands spent on the enlightenment of the children of the working-class, where they do not stint the millions spent for military or naval purposes. And when progressives come into office, their performance sadly lags behind their professions.

Education counts for so little in England because intelligence itself is not esteemed. Is there any other language in which the word "clever" has a decidedly derogatory sense? An artist, or rather, the work of an artist is sometimes called clever. But, apart from the fact that an artist is not altogether a gentleman, the dubious compliment is usually applied when it is to be followed by some criticism which implies that he lacks soul, inspiration, or profundity. Foreigners are generally called clever, and no kindness is meant when they are thus qualified.

I have mentioned already that during the War the English continually suffered from the illusion that their opponents, although they lacked decency, morality, and humanity, outshone them in one thing only, in their cleverness, which was truly diabolical. While the trusting English had rested in peaceful unpreparedness, the Germans had planned and schemed for "the day", that mysterious zero hour when they would spring upon the unsuspecting English and try to wipe them from the face of the earth.

Mr. Horatio Bottomley, who, notwithstanding ulterior misfortunes from which I am glad to say

he has since recovered, may be said to have voiced the public sense during the dark years of war with a talent that no one could emulate, always allowed his popular journal to be used as a tribune by the patriots who wished to warn their fellow citizens against the hellish plots that were being hatched beyond the Rhine. There was the hidden hand, which, as Mr. William Le Queux explained in *John Bull*, operated through the Channel Tunnel, cleverly and secretly completed by the wily Hun. There was Mr. Pemberton Billing's black book of the 47,000, the unmentionable directory of Albanian origin which held the names of all the Englishmen liable on account of the viciousness of their lives to blackmail at the hands of the Wilhelmstrasse. Then came the dumping scare, when it was revealed how the clever foreigner piled up his goods, to flood the English market and destroy the industries of the land, if cleverer still, he did not wilfully damage his own currency in order to undersell the loyal Englishman who nobly clung to his unalloyed gold standard.

In 1925 the *Daily News* discovered another mare's nest, when it showed how foreigners sent out coded messages by the wireless installation of the G.P.O., which conveyed to the ends of the world the secrets of English naval dockyards and arsenals, and, disappointing anti-climax, the latest news of the Stock and Foreign Exchange markets, while the poor English dealer, so painfully devoid of cleverness, waited till he found this information in the City columns of his paper the following morning.

With such weapons no Englishman would fight, even if he had the capacity!

If cleverness is diabolical, intelligence is pompous and its name should not be mentioned by people who value good form. Italians, Frenchmen, Jews, take delight in having intelligent children. I doubt whether an English father ever experienced a thrill at the discovery that his son had unusually sharp wits.

It is a fact recognised by the English themselves that they are bad linguists; in other words, that their intelligence is unable to grasp the subtleties of the grammar of foreign tongues, to penetrate the intricacies of semantic deviations, or divest itself of the fetters imposed on it by childhood and environment. That foreign tongues are badly pronounced by the English is due to a different reason, which is purely physiological and muscular. The English have a language which is difficult to themselves, and to this may be attributed the fact that there are more stammerers and people afflicted with minor defects of speech in this country than elsewhere, although other reasons, such as the psychological repressions from which most English people suffer, may have contributed to the spread of these defects.

The linguistic short-comings of the English have affected their typography, with its quaint notion of italicising all foreign words, although Marxians might remark that the custom of paying the compositor twice for every line which contains words in italic and in roman may have something to do

with the survival of a mannerism that mars the appearance of so many pages of print. Their ignorance reveals itself in scores of books, even by good writers, where foreign words are regularly misspelt and foreign phrases misquoted. Few authors take the trouble to avail themselves of the services of a linguist to read their proofs.

It is hardly surprising that at this point we meet with one of the usual contradictions in the English character. How is it that these people who are so incapable of learning foreign languages are among the best Oriental linguists in the world? How can the same public schoolboys who scarcely know their own language suddenly become acquainted with four Oriental languages if they are transported beyond the Suez Canal and join the Indian Police or the Indian Civil Service? Surely, Eastern languages are much more difficult than French or German?

The Englishman, we all know, is a successful coloniser. Now this can hardly be attributed to intentional effort, for he is almost incapable of acting according to plan. We must be careful to distinguish between the great things done by him in the past, when spirit of enterprise, material strength, and the assistance of intelligent Scots enabled him to overcome the resistance of ill-organised and decaying native communities, and the more recent achievements where much more was due to the goodwill of the administered and their acceptance of his superiority. We shall find then that the Englishman has succeeded in imposing his pre-eminence upon the subject-races by behaving,

unconsciously, like the natural rulers and princes of these nations. His great quality is aloofness, due as much almost to lack of comprehension of the native mind and contempt for it as to premeditation.

When they find themselves in the East, the members of the nation that knows itself to be the best in the world must be more than ever penetrated with the exalted sense of their superiority. Race prejudice, stronger in England than in any other country which has no coloured population within its own territory, has saved them from the sacrifice of prestige which is involved in inter-racial love-making. The self-control and reserve practised at home cling to the Englishman transported to the East or to the tropics. The Oriental sees a grave and dignified mien, and deems that he stands before a man born to command. The Englishman himself feels born to command, and is accepted as a ruler in consequence. The Eastern world judges by appearances as much as our own, and is even more receptive to the suggestive force of self-confidence.

The sahib does not mind whether his orders are spoken conformably to style, grace and grammar, provided they are obeyed. There is no need to speak perfectly when one addresses a "nigger", and fearlessness, as it happens, is the best way to learn a language. There is no diffidence about the planter or the administrator. While European foreigners are inferior, they are felt to be less distant, especially if they are not dagoes, and to rouse their ironic smile is undignified. Outside Europe, such sensitiveness is unnecessary.

But this capacity for learning Oriental languages is very significant. It proves that, when he has a mind to it, the Englishman can learn things and use his brains as well as an ordinary human being. It proves that one of his most striking characteristics is not inherent in his nature, but the result of external circumstance. Having established this important point, I may perhaps allow myself to say at this stage already that the un-intelligence of the English is not only partial but deliberate, that it has not always existed in the past, and that there is no reason to believe that it will persist in the future. I felt it necessary to draw the reader's attention to this important qualification precisely at this point, because, being a foreigner, I find it difficult to rid myself of the notion that it is not polite to suggest to anybody that he lacks cleverness or intelligence. This is one more proof of the fact that nobody can divest himself of his own nature. I ought to realise that my English reader will wonder what on earth I have said that requires an apology.

Meanwhile the fact remains that to the observer of the English of our own time much in this country appears unaccountable except on the theory that intelligence does not matter. Is there any country in the world—I have not the honour of being acquainted with the United States of America—where it is possible for an author to be taken as an expert on the history of a foreign nation on the strength of a few well-written historical novels, or to become a fellow of a learned body like the Royal * * * Society after having followed up these historical

novels by a few books dealing with the history of the same foreign nation, in which wrong dates and mistakes about matters of fact and about institutions are clouded in a rhetorical style and wrapped in an atmosphere at once false and subjective? Can one conceive of a public apart from that of England continuing to take seriously such books even when they have been demolished by the criticism of experts in the country about which they have been written?

The critical faculty of the English is dormant to a very large extent, and half-knowledge is rife among those whose minds are open to the better things that are withheld from them. It is not that England has no scholars. The old Universities, for all their worship of physical fitness, and the new Universities without any restriction whatever, can be pitted against the best on the European continent. What country can offer an improvement upon the London School of Economics or the Institute of Historical Research? What finer curriculum of studies could one conceive than Oxford Greats? Is not the school of Phonetics of University College, London, without a peer in the whole world? But the minds of the scholars are miserably divorced from those of their fellow citizens. The English have not yet realised that there is such a thing as the acceptance of recognised authority in the sphere of mental discipline. In the rather exceptional case of those who love the things of the mind, they grope for their way among unadulterated rubbish that obscures from their sight the good works that are at hand.

Consider the vogue for pseudo-sciences like phrenology, palmistry, astrology, the seriousness with which the assertions of British Israelites are taken, and the length of shelving devoted to the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy. It is not surprising that Englishmen themselves sometimes despair. I have an enlightened English friend who contends that his compatriots have not yet emerged from the dark ages, and who doubts whether they ever will. "The chaotic mind of my fellow-countrymen", he once wrote to me, "has much contributed to the epic grandeur of their language. Only unintelligent people could have produced our Authorised Version of the Bible, which is undoubtedly the best in the world, and which owes its supreme beauty and majesty to its very obscurity. Who could translate into French this sentence of Sir Walter Raleigh: The long day of mankind draweth forth towards an evening, and the world's tragedy and time are nearly at an end?"

The argument is attractive, but I cannot make it mine. I shall attempt to give my grounds for holding more hopeful views in a later chapter.

. . . . .

It would be surprising if, with the attitude they adopt towards the things of the mind, the English were the bearers of a great culture. We must avoid all risk of misunderstanding. Lack of culture does not imply lack of civilisation. Civilisation is collective self-restraint carried to such a degree that the restraint has become well-nigh imperceptible.

Together with the Scots, the Scandinavians and the inhabitants of the protestant provinces of Holland, the English belong to the really civilised peoples of the world. The Germans cannot yet be included in this list without reservation; they are still too close to the German Empire. Civilisation is discipline from below, not from above. Civilised people have no *Putsche*.

English civilisation, like most things English, is of course a thing in itself. The English are internally an absolutely disarmed people. Their police carry no lethal weapons and yet they are very rarely the victims of murderous assaults, because disarmament on their part has brought about the disarmament of habitual criminals. This is the final criterion of civilisation as far as it can be achieved in our time.

Culture may be a great civilising force, but it is not civilisation. The military caste of Germany before the war was quite tolerably cultured. The sneer at *Kultur*, which was so prevalent in England during the war, and which, with its misunderstanding of the different meaning the word has in the German language, implied such sad impotence and awe, was nevertheless not without a reasonable basis. Culture has little value without civilisation. Were the warring Greeks civilised for all their culture? Culture cannot subsist indefinitely without civilisation.

The English, at any rate, have laid the foundation for the culture they will one day acquire. Culture is entirely a thing of the mind. It is the appreciation of beauty in its manifold aspects based on an

adequate understanding of the past. A man who would know all there is to be known about the plastic arts since the beginning of the twentieth century could never be called cultured, if he had no understanding of the roots of all the beauty with which he was so well acquainted. An historical sense is the very basis of culture.

This historical sense, however, is almost entirely lacking among the English. This may seem a bold assertion when one thinks of the beefeaters of the Tower of London, the coach of the Lord Mayor, or the wig of the Speaker of the House of Commons. But these survivals of the past are empty shells. The uninterrupted development of the law of England, and the tenacity with which institutions of the past refuse to die are apt to mislead us. The English are traditionalists, who hate to change names or to lay iconoclastic hands upon inherited forms. Forms and formulas and the manner of doing things, not the things themselves, are of moment in their eyes. But at heart, they are revolutionaries. In *Sur la Pierre Blanche*, Anatole France has expressed the belief that a day would come when England would embrace Socialism while keeping her King and her House of Lords, and would refuse to join the United States of Europe, but would declare herself its ally. It is in this spirit that the early Fabians decided to work for socialisation through the existing political parties.

The French have far more sense of unity with the past. Their Revolution had scarcely started when it took over the aggressive foreign policy and the pas-

sion for centralisation of their former kings. England has adopted a system of complete political freedom while the fiction of an unlimited Royal power survives. Parliamentary procedure scarcely differs from what it was under Charles I, but Parliament passes laws that would make the Covenanters gasp. Communism will never flourish in England because it implies a new form of Government. But with the Speaker in the chair and the mace in its traditional position, the Parliament at Westminster may yet enact a brand of collectivism that will amaze the very Bolsheviks. In no country in the world did the nineteenth century differ more radically from its predecessor than in England, but if Pitt had returned to the Parliament of Gladstone he would not have felt out of place. The English have rebuilt their house in reinforced concrete, but they have left its old thatched roof.

Where the very basis of culture is lacking, no great efflorescence of the sense of beauty is to be expected. Literature alone is completely healthy. A nation that can boast a Wells, a Galsworthy, a Bennett, that possesses a Forster, a Lytton Strachey and an Aldous Huxley, has reason to be proud of itself. But with a language like theirs, the English would be criminals if they did not use it to good effect. The musical achievements of contemporary England are such that this country no longer deserves to be described as it was once by a German, as *das Land ohne Musik*. But music is of all the arts the most self-contained, and that which stands farthest from the popular psyche. Holst and Delius are caviare to the general.

And besides they are of foreign origin. Vaughan Williams lives upon the musical past of England.

English painting is entirely derivative: it is what study and imitation of the French have made it. This is no matter for reproach since French painting remains supreme in our day, and owes much to English painting of an earlier period. The greatest sculptor of England is a foreigner, whose work is loathed and abhorred by most right-minded Englishmen. The misprision of Epstein's genius is not an unhealthy phenomenon. Next to understanding and appreciation of beauty, there is no better thing than the rage of the Philistine. It testifies to the dim realisation of the existence of problems of art, and is infinitely to be preferred to indifference. The men who admired the Albert Memorial could not have worked themselves into the passion which devours the breast of the readers of the *Daily Telegraph*. The smart young people who tar and feather Rima are the heralds of the dawn of beauty in England.

There remains one form of art whose utter decay is a steady reproach to the people of England. Their architecture is the laughing-stock of the western world. We must remember that architecture occupies a place by itself among the witnesses of culture. It is not merely the work of the artist, but the result of the co-operation of three agents: the architects, the people who commission them, and the public. Of these three agents, the last is the most important. Theories of art for art's sake, which are entirely in their place in other arts, do not affect the architect. Unlike other artists he is a professional man; one

who, moreover, can only execute his work after he has sold it. This he will never do unless he carries with him the approval of the public. He has to study its taste and must work as it orders him. On the other hand he has many opportunities for influencing this taste, especially in the course of his contacts with the people who commission his work. In England the public never demands, and the architect rarely counsels, beauty.

A thought which has never entered the heads of those who order, execute or admire buildings, is that local patriotism is not enough, and that there is also a patriotism of the fourth dimension. Is it not true that when we read or think of certain periods of history, we feel glad that we did not belong to them? Who could wish he had been a late Merovingian, a Frenchman of 1816, or an Englishman of 1870? Do we not all feel glad that we shall not have to stand bodily before posterity and confess that we belong to the generation of the Great War and took part in its orgies of hatred and folly? Do we not, on the other hand, feel that we should treat with the deepest respect one of the Flemish burghers who built their belfries and resisted the great Kings of France, or the men who ventured across the great unknown ocean to plant the flag of England upon distant shores? Are we not full of admiration for the men who gave England Westminster Abbey or the churches of London that were built after the Great Fire? For these men have given the things which they themselves conceived, they have erected to themselves monuments of character, upon which

they deeply impressed the mark of their very own minds.

What will the generations of the future say of Regent Street, of the Corner Houses and of the theatres of present-day London?[1] How will they judge the post-war pseudo-renaissance style? Will their psychologists explain the supererogatory columns, stuck as an after-thought against concrete buildings that rest upon their own steel frames, as symbols of a phallic obsession? Will their builders not despise men who, blinded by their ritualistic mentality, worshipped empty forms inherited by their ancestors from earlier ancestors, and were unable to be other than pale reflections, untrue to their own selves, unable to speak a resonant and forceful language of their own? Even the ants adapt their building to circumstances. But the English still build as though they lived in the year 1800.

This chapter must now end, lest I forget that my book is merely descriptive. It must be remembered that the English have the qualities of their defects. They do not reckon, compute, or think. They are guided through life by lights other than that of the mind. They march through life very straight, nevertheless. They are successful because the conceptions which lie at the basis of their activity are essentially vital, not, or at least not necessarily, because they are true. And having achieved success, they rather

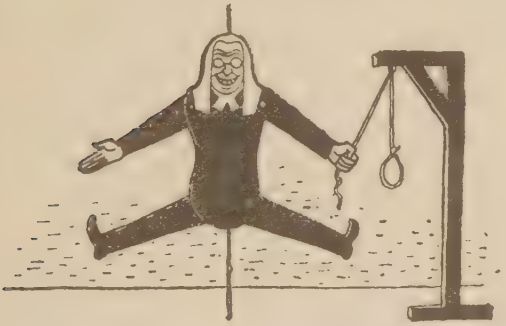
[1] "Mr. Austin Reed, head of the firm of that name in Regent Street, speaking at a luncheon in London . . . made reference to the necessity for advertising Regent Street as the first street of Europe" (*Observer*, April 6, 1930).

naturally consider their assumptions to be true. This is where their power of self-delusion helps them. Theirs is a vivifying self-delusion, which is undoubtedly to be preferred to the jejuneness of vision which enabled the French aristocrats of the end of the old régime to look detachedly into the abyss into which, eventually, they were dragged down. In similar circumstances such clearness of vision could not be vouchsafed to modern Englishmen. They would fancy for themselves a golden bridge of salvation—and walk across it.

VI

THE LAW OF ENGLAND

A very impressive system, and the best in the world.
An eye for an eye, and the rope as often as possible.
The beauties of the jury-system



Conceivably, there may come a time when England and the whole of Great Britain will no longer be able to support themselves by their trade and their industry. Another altruistic war, a long spell of conservative government, or a rigid system of Imperial federation which would place the English at the mercy of the foreign members of the British Commonwealth, might easily make it more profitable for Englishmen to live on public charity than to continue working at a loss. How will the English community live in such a case?

When all foreign investments have been sold,

when air transport has passed into the hands of the Germans, factories into the hands of the Americans, when exports have dwindled to the point of making all talk of the balance of trade a contradiction in terms, the fundamental vitality of the English nation will yet find a solution for its difficulties. Without using the term "invisible exports", without other concerted action than the appointment of a Royal Commission, the English will organise themselves into a nation that lives by rendering services. The idea of transforming England into a vast museum and a centre of attraction for wealthy tourists is not new; it is already beginning to be applied. The intelligent stage management of the "Cheshire Cheese" tavern will excite imitation and the whole business of catering for the foreign visitor will be rationalised. Instead of aliens' officers who ask him whether he is a male or a female and impress him with the fact that to be allowed to spend ten days in England is a favour of which he is really undeserving, the foreigner will meet on his arrival friendly representatives of the "Come to Britain" movement who will thank him for honouring the country with his presence, and will provide him with useful information. As such a task cannot be congenial to true Englishmen, it will have to be delegated to foreigners, most probably to Irishmen.

The visitor will find hotels that will not primarily aim at getting rid of him, that will place at his disposal the facilities an Englishman expects to find in his own home, and will no longer be built upon the principle, so deeply ingrained in the mind of the

English, that foreigners take no baths. Instead of food that merely, and barely, holds body and soul together, the visitor will be given meals he can remember with pleasure. Foreign waiters will take the place of Englishmen, who are too proud to serve, and London and the great provincial centres will no longer offer an uncomfortable bed as the only retreat after eleven o'clock at night.

In the middle of all this change one thing will remain, unaltered, fascinating and unique, the English administration of justice. The wigs which prevent hard thinking, the formulas which are worshipped for their own sake, will still be seen and heard in the new England that has become accessible to tourists. The same judge will still pronounce in cases of collision and of collusion, and black patches of cloth, still called caps, will be worn as of old when judges condemn to death wretches who in other countries would go free or be conveyed to the asylums. Americans collecting quaintness will still be able to sample it in the English courts of law.

Excessively though it may be used in our day, and deserving of the same indignant condemnation which befell the epithet "nice" at the hands of Jane Austen, the word "quaint" remains the only one that properly expresses the spectator's view of the law of this country. Appropriately, the Public Record Office has been built in the close vicinity of the Law Courts, in order to enable solicitors' clerks to dig up without loss of time antique materials with which to feed the passions of contemporary litigants.

Apart from its quaintness, English justice does not differ from that of ordinary human beings. Both are fallible, both are based on compromise between the incapacity of man to judge his neighbours with enlightenment and without passion, and the need for dealing with dangerous aberrations with the help of the only available instrument, human reason. Logically, Tolstoianism is the only conception of justice that will hold water; in practice it is the only one which can on no account be tolerated. Like other people, the English judge and err. But in so doing they adopt an attitude which differs radically from that of other people. The late Lord Birkenhead, writing about the law of England, called it "the pattern of justice which it has been, and is still admitted to be, throughout the world" (Introduction to *The Adventures of Ralph Rashleigh*, 1929, p. 9). In this instance, at any rate, the noble Lord was the mouthpiece of his fellow-countrymen. I believe that, like them, he was mistaken, and that neither the law of England nor its administration is or is admitted by outsiders to be a pattern for the rest of the world.

The law of England is a maze in which no expert can find his way. When travelling through it, the Englishman has to change his guides at each turning of the road. He is entirely at their mercy. They form the most strongly organised trade union in the country, and cling to their monopoly with the tenacity of medieval craftsmen. Admission to the higher guild of lawyers is obtained by eating dinners and passing wine clockwise round little tables and by paying colossal sums to elder brethren of the guild.

A small modicum of learning is also required for this admission, but real legal knowledge is to be found in the lower guild of lawyers, the only one with which the faithful are allowed to communicate. The higher caste officiates behind curtains, and only appears in public, adorned with ceremonial attire, in exceptional circumstances.

For the privilege of receiving the ministrations of legal experts the English have to pay very highly. Commenting on a case in which a lady had to pay £500 costs in a dispute about a carpet involving the sum of £250, Judge Crawford declared: "It seems deplorable that such things should be allowed to go on in this country. It is a grave blot upon our judicial system that costs should be allowed to run up to these enormous figures. I suppose it will go on, scandal, scandal, scandal, until somebody is strong enough and wise enough to stop it. I hope this poor lady will never again venture on the sea of the law" (*Evening Standard*, December 13, 1927). When a Frenchman has a quarrel with his neighbour, he looks up his civil code and knows where he stands. When an Englishman has a quarrel he must go to one of the scribes who interpret the law.

The three main characteristics of the administration of justice in England are its incorruptibility, its rapidity, and its harshness. The incorruptibility of English judges is a thing so well established, so universally admitted, that I see no need to expatiate upon so evident a proposition. Incorruptibility is not enough. Impartiality is not less necessary. But it requires absence of class-bias, and freedom from

prejudice. The first is difficult, in view of the fact that judges are recruited from among barristers, while the second is self-contradictory. The mere fact that the court lends its ear more readily to a K.C. than to an ordinary barrister proves that the litigant who can afford the services of the former is at an advantage. The very aloofness so ostensibly affected by judges detaches them to a certain degree from the human point of view which is so necessary in order to understand human motives. Moreover, the fact that a certain amount of responsibility devolves from the judge upon the jury tends to mechanise the working of the judicial brain.

The jury-system is a disease from which the English suffer in common with most other Western nations. I believe that among civilised peoples only the Dutch and to a certain extent the South Africans are immune from it. The English differ from other people in one respect: they love their disease and boast about it. They genuinely believe that the jury-system ensures the impartial administration of justice. It seems to me that if judges are what they should be they have no need of twelve lay-assessors. Personally, if I were unfortunate enough to find myself before a tribunal, I should prefer to be judged by one half-prejudiced and half-enlightened man than by twelve prejudiced and unenlightened persons. There is a classical saying of a famous K.C. who, on passing a fish-shop, caught sight of a gaping cod, and exclaimed "That reminds me, I must address a special jury to-morrow". Mr. Eden Philpott has subtly analysed the mental processes of

twelve good men and true in his excellent novel *The Jury*, which at any rate proves this much, that it is not beyond the capacity of the human brain to conceive of an English jury returning a wrong verdict.

None of the precautions which circumscribe the effect of the jury-disease have ever been adopted in England. A majority-decision is not allowed, and unanimous verdicts are demanded, because English law is so innocent of realism that it still accepts the fiction that truth in matters of fact is ascertainable by a random gathering of human individuals. It has not even appeared desirable to follow the example of the Scots and to allow a jury to return a verdict of non-proven. Far from recommending the adoption of this safeguard, many English writers continue to find fault with it.

The English believe that their judicial system gives the accused a better chance of establishing his innocence than any other judicial system in the world. They feel that the ruthless fashion in which their judges eliminate the irrelevant always works in favour of the accused. But is there not much to be said in favour of the French method which gives free rein to witnesses and allows them to bring forward details which illustrate the character of the accused, which may explain his motives, and which will help the court to form a fairer opinion of the case? The French judge an individual, the English believe that they judge only an isolated action. As though a human action could ever be isolated from its antecedents or from the circumstances in which it was committed! It is natural that, enslaved

by such illusions, the English should make no distinction between the many ways in which a person may culpably take the life of another person.

This formalist administration of justice, with its disregard for the personal factor, is also evident in the boasted rapidity of English jurisdiction. It is true that in England persons are not suffered to remain in jail for months or even years without appearing before a magistrate. But nobody in this country has ever animadverted upon the drawbacks of sentences passed with the quickness of lightning. Some years ago a distinguished foreign jurist on a visit to England was invited by a magistrate to be present while he was administering summary justice. In the course of the afternoon a prisoner was placed in the dock, and a policeman declared that, hearing cries of "Stop thief!" he had arrested the accused who was running away, and that a shopkeeper had accused him of stealing a pair of socks from a stall. The accused pleaded guilty and had nothing to say in his defence. He was condemned to imprisonment for a period of weeks. The magistrate turned to his visitor and asked with a smile: "This would have taken longer in your country, wouldn't it? Don't you prefer our system which convicts within an hour of the offence?" The visitor replied: "Of course, in my country there would have been a remand for a week. But during that time information would have been obtained about the man, questions would have been asked about his family, his responsibilities, whether he had any work, and what was his financial situation. The verdict

would be pronounced only after the results of the enquiry had received due consideration. I do not think our system the worse of the two."

The third characteristic of English justice is its harshness. The thought that the criminal may be a victim of society or of circumstance, that society has obligations towards him as well as a right to protect itself against him, is almost absent from the judicial mind, and altogether from public consciousness. English law is still a *lex talionis*, even if the principle of an eye for an eye is not carried out to its final consequences. The criminal must pay, first and foremost. Any act of grace, such as one of those rare occurrences when a man is sent to a criminal lunatic asylum instead of to the gallows, is sure to raise a storm of protest in one or another section of the community. English judges and magistrates proceed with a sureness which seems to imply that they are guided by a light from above. If it be true that the accused person is not treated as one who has to prove his innocence but as one whose guilt remains to be proved, it is not less a fact that, once found guilty, the prisoner as often as not receives a heavier penalty than in most other countries.

The survival of the death penalty, the way it is looked upon by English jurists, and the way it is loved by the bulk of the public as a dear and precious possession[1], is enough to justify one in establishing

[1] On December 12, 1927, the papers announced that a play called *The Adventures of Charles Pease* would be performed that evening, and that Mr. John Ellis, the retired public executioner, would act as the hangman.

a fundamental difference between English and continental conceptions of justice. After all, it is important to remember that the spirit of our time is against it. The vague but real common denominator of mankind which points, not without hesitation, but yet with a remarkable persistence, in a definitely ascertainable direction, demands recognition, even if it cannot command acceptance. It is they who reject it who must be apologetic even if they be in the right. And just as the spirit of our time bids us be honest in our art, purposeful in our architecture, efficient in our endeavours to assure public hygiene and popular education, it also urges us to be humane in our laws and gentle in our treatment of our fellow human beings.

Yet in England it is the opponent of the death penalty who speaks only by the leave of his compatriots. The nation loves its executioners, and experiences a thrill of self-righteous satisfaction at the news of each artificial extinction of human life. It is not my task to moralise. I need not labour the facts, obvious to all unprejudiced thinkers, that the death penalty degrades those who impose it, those who apply it, and those who tolerate it. I need not expatiate upon the *obiter dictum* that no prospective penalty will influence the mind of the murderer, who either imagines he will be able to hide his action and escape punishment, or else acts under the influence of a passion which blinds him to the consequences of his crime. I can only state the fact that all civilised nations have either abolished the death penalty, in principle or in practice, or

else diminished its incidence by allowing juries to ignore the letter of the law.

In England, the love of the gallows is far from being on the wane. With the execution of the late Mrs. Edith Thompson a tradition that was beginning to establish itself in England was rudely shattered. In older days a different fashion in feminine lingerie made hanging an unsuitable form of execution for women, especially as executions had, in those days, at least the merit of being performed in public, so that people could judge for themselves after how many minutes "instantaneous death" took place. No doubt, when the twentieth century refrained from hanging women, it had reasons of its own. Public sentiment disliked the horrible idea of a woman being manhandled and dragged to the gallows. If this innovation may have implied a certain disregard for the principle of sex-equality, it was nevertheless a step in the right direction. It meant that more than half the population of England was immune from a particularly odious and unnecessary penalty. It is a fact worthy of notice that during this spell of administrative mellowness, criminality among women showed no sign of increase. Murder continued as before, a happily rare but undeniably rather masculine pursuit. It only remained for the nation's eyes to become still further opened to reality, and its ears to the voice of the Time, for men to share this feminine immunity.

But Mrs. Edith Thompson had to be hanged in order to satisfy the cry of English womanhood. *Mulier mulieri lupa.* Mrs. Edith Thompson was

condemned by the jury of public opinion, whose voice is not always heeded on those very rare occasions when it cries for mercy, but which never fails to obtain a hearing when it downs thumbs. In a foreign country Bywaters would have been found guilty of unpremeditated murder or of manslaughter and Mrs. Thompson would have been a witness for the prosecution. But the inexorable spirit of English law does not indulge in nice subtleties and both the wife and her friend were accused of murder and condemned to death. Yet it was felt that Bywaters was somewhat guiltier than Mrs. Thompson, and he could therefore not well be reprieved if she was to be suspended by the neck.

And so, since the execution of Mrs. Thompson, hangings have continued, often as the sequel of verdicts passed on circumstantial evidence, without any decrease in the number of murders, but to the great satisfaction of law-abiding citizens, who cannot understand that one can walk in the streets of Copenhagen or of Amsterdam—where murderers are not hurled into annihilation—without going in fear of one's life. These citizens would of course not dream of performing themselves the operation they deem so indispensable to their own safety.

Many are the curious notions entertained by the English on the subject of the law of their country. One illusion, that of the perfection of the police force and of the individuals who compose it, has gone by the board. I do not mean that whispers used not to be heard, some ten years ago, to the effect that only those street-bookies and prostitutes

who neglected to make sure of the goodwill of the policeman on the beat were liable to interference. But any doubter would almost certainly have been met by an indignant reply somewhat in the following form: "Look, sir, at this policeman on point duty. Consider this splendid fellow, how well-clothed, how healthy and well-fed he appears. Do you suggest that he would accept a vile bribe? See how massive he is: he stands for order and stability. How efficient, how penetrated he is with his own importance, yet how benevolent and full of understanding! He is so obviously capable that he would succeed at any job at which he cared to try his hand. Think of the manifold callings exercised by retired policemen! But he clings to his present occupation for the sheer love of it. No, sir, this pillar of society at any rate has remained sound!"

Since the happy days when such views prevailed, we have lived to witness a police strike and scandals which have proved that policemen are human beings. Even the English have become aware of this fact to such an extent that they have seriously meditated depriving their idols of their symbolic helmets. The helmet was the mainstay of the policeman's reputation. Only those who have visited a police-station and seen a helmetless policeman wiping his brow can know that a constable is as much a man as a carpenter or a greengrocer. One cannot help smiling, therefore, when one finds how, after a sensational law case which proved that two English people and one foreigner had been guilty of corruptly giving and accepting bribes, the authorities

decided that the situation demanded a series of raids on . . . foreigners in Soho.

There still exists, among the English, a conviction that Scotland Yard is the best detective organisation of the world. This is another fond illusion, and one that has recently been shaken. Scotland Yard's success is due to an immense extent to the incredible measure of co-operation which it receives from the public. However lawless the English may be in small matters, criminal affairs find them on the side of authority. When a crime is detected, the police appeal to the public for information. Their task consists of three things. They draw up a questionnaire for the use of the public, they classify the answers received, and they seek among their lists of habitual criminals for the likely culprit. If the crime is committed by a new man, Scotland Yard is baffled, unless the man betrays himself by his own clumsiness.

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It is undeniable that the *crime passionel* has received no recognition in English judicial practice, which anxiously wards off any factor likely to take the edge off its natural harshness. But the English go too far when they assert that it is a conception which has never affected the minds of their juries. During the war an Englishman shot the lover of his wife. The victim was a foreigner, and the accused was acquitted by the jury. It was a perfect case of acquittal on the French pattern. But on the following morning the whole London Press printed leading articles which endeavoured to argue that the ver-

dict was not the result of any toying with theories of *crime passionel*. This is what unsympathetic foreigners call English hypocrisy, and what a friend of the English would call their happy capacity for transcending logic.

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In striking opposition to their general regard for the law of their country is the readiness of English people to evade it on occasion. Street-betting is unlawful and generally practised. Almost everybody in this country has a bet on Derby Day, and in the majority of cases these bets infringe the law. Lotteries are illegal in all circumstances. But vast sweepstakes are held which cannot possibly be called anything but lotteries. In the country, all over England, alcoholic beverages are consumed in public houses out of hours, and many people go to much trouble in order to obtain drinks which, as I have been able to experience myself, have undoubtedly a better taste than those consumed during the legal time. The opening of shops on Sundays is forbidden under old statutes which clerical influence maintains, and which are observed only by those who would close their shops even if they were not compelled to do so. In localities where unusually zealous police officers deem it desirable to prosecute offenders the magistrates systematically impose nominal fines which represent but a small percentage on the profits made by the Sunday traders.

The divorce courts reveal a similar systematic evasion of laws which do not command the respect

of the people. The antiquated notion that divorce must be a reward given to a deserving party fails to take into account that humanity is somewhat undeserving by nature, and that righteousness can never be the monopoly of one party.

The law, it is true, is a fiction. But more than any fiction, apart perhaps from morality and good manners, it is indispensable to the smooth running of the social machine. It is dangerous to allow people systematically to divorce legal from moral obligation, and as soon as acts are forbidden by law which the citizen does not consider it bad form to commit, there is grave risk that the whole body of the law will fall into disrepute. The fact that a nation which professes to believe its law to be a model of perfection should also deem the infringement of many of that law's prescriptions to be moral and even necessary is a further revelation of the lack of continuity in its mental processes which differentiates it from the rest of mankind.

VII

THIS SIDE OF THE GRAVE

Conformity a social virtue in England. Lack of conformity in religious life. Why? The ups and downs of religious experience. The future of the Church of England

The English of to-day like to live according to pattern. The cult of silent strength, the disapproval of self-revelation and the dislike of mental effort have levelled and toned down their social life. The freak pains his neighbours more than he angers them. Meals in one home are very much the same as those in another, and the pleasures of one suburb do not greatly differ from those of the next. A Liberty tie would create a commotion in the City or ruin the prospects of an aspiring bank manager. My side-whiskers once came near to causing a breach of the peace at an agricultural show in Oxfordshire, while in the summer of 1929 Mr.

Cook, the miners' leader, was requested to leave a restaurant in Holborn because he wore no jacket. Many things are done in England for the sole reason that they are "done", still more remain undone because they are "not done". On the top of an omnibus one will frequently see all the seats on the left occupied, all those on the right vacant. There is a good reason for preferring a seat on the left side, but how many people know it? Most passengers sit on the left because others do.

To be odd, in England, is to be rude. The unusual is unpleasant, originality is unsocial. In politics, the two-party system is favoured, and Liberals are disliked because they do not now fit into the pattern. The game of politics cannot be played unless there are parties and issues: it was necessary therefore that voters and candidates should divide themselves into two groups. But these groups differed little in principle until the Labour movement introduced new issues that smacked of reality and battle-cries borrowed from those continentals who will call things by their proper names, and think out absurdly logical schemes. Between Victorian and Edwardian Liberals and Conservatives there were few fundamental divergencies, and electoral reform or Irish Home Rule never knew where their next champion would arise. On matters of behaviour the English—apart from the freaks—always agree, on matters of principle they differ little. Prejudices, male dress, bad cooking, hospitality, national pride, animal-worship, shyness, indifference to the things of the mind and to things of beauty, are standardised

within each social layer, and vary but slightly from one class to another.

Why is it that, in one sphere only, conformity is so utterly forsaken? Why do the English split up into small congregations which worship differently conceived deities in a great variety of manners? Why does the religion of the English display to a disconcerting degree the individuality which is excluded from their everyday life? Can it be that to the English religion is a thing that does not matter?

Such a conception is contrary to everything that is asserted on the subject by many English and foreign observers. Elie Halévy, beyond a peradventure the foreign historian who has best understood the English, devotes a large part of his masterly volume on England in 1815 to the religious life of the period. He shows how the Methodist revival, followed by the Evangelical movement, exercised a profound influence upon the outlook and the politics of the English. I have frequently heard Halévy's work quoted as an argument against those who assert that the English are a nation of unbelievers. But I think that both schools of thought, those who consider the English to be pagans, and those who affirm them to be profoundly religious, are equally mistaken.

A comprehensive judgement of the English attitude towards religion is impossible to anyone who focuses his entire attention upon one single period of their history. Looking only, say, at 1650, or again at 1820, one would come to the conclusion that the English

are either religious maniacs or profound believers. Considering them at the period of 1730 or 1912 one might be tempted to call them church-going atheists. A picture very different from these two appears if one follows them in the course of the last four centuries.

Medieval Catholicism in England was already somewhat unorthodox. It displayed an audacity of thought and possessed a nationalistic outlook which frequently caused displeasure to the Papal court. With Henry VIII the English became schismatic, and like him they remained Catholics and burners of heretics. With Edward VI they became Protestants and burned dissenters. But under both monarchs burnings and beheadings, inspired by reasons of state rather than by religious intolerance, were kept within the limits of respectability and decency, and in any case executions were considerably less frequent than in the deeply religious countries of Western Europe. With Mary the English returned, on the whole in very orderly fashion, to the Roman fold. Less than three hundred burnings in four years' time sufficed to earn for Mary the appellation of "bloody". She met with no very strong resistance, and worldly wisdom moved many adherents of the new religion to make the best of both worlds and pay lip-service to the old Church. With Elizabeth came Anglicanism, which gave the English an early training in the art of attributing two contradictory predicates to one object.

One cannot say that at any time during the

sixteenth century a new spirit breathed over the religious soul of the nation. The seventeenth century differs from the sixteenth in that it reveals much that is genuinely religious. For all its faults—and of the faults and sins of Puritanism and Protestantism against the beauty which alone makes human life tolerable, too much can never be said—Puritanism was sincere and religious. I ought perhaps at this stage to make clear what I understand by the word "religion." For the words "religion" and "religious" are systematically appropriated by sophists who worship form and are prepared to sacrifice all things, provided they be allowed to preserve empty names. They will even call religion a conviction, intuitively acquired, that there is at the bottom of all things some central principle which gives them meaning. This aperceptive philosophy is something entirely different from the traditional and genuine lexicographic meaning of the word "religion". Equally mistaken is the view of those formalists who contend that religion resides in church buildings where ministers perform a ritual and congregations attend ceremonies.

Words have a life, and a man who refuses to use the word "hecatomb" in any other sense than that of a sacrifice of one hundred oxen is unaware of the science of semantics. Nevertheless verbal anarchism is a sin against the genius of language which should not be tolerated under the cloak of philology. In its etymological sense, which is still its real living sense, the word "religion" means: link. It is a link between man and the deity, or if one likes between

the material and the spiritual world. Religion, then, is a conception of life which, basing itself upon the belief in a spiritual and immortal principle in man, considers that the fate of this principle after the death of the body is of far greater importance than the earthly existence before death and, in consequence, subordinates the earthly existence to the existence after death.

Now it cannot be denied that the Puritans accepted and emphasised this subordination of earthly life to the hereafter, and that they were therefore deeply religious. But they were a minority, however active and influential. And after the Restoration the majority of the English nation once more returned with zest to the enjoyment of earthly existence, allowing it to be but little influenced by a concern for the nebulous hereafter. In the eighteenth century indifference to the life after death continued to increase. The Established Church became worldly and irreligious in the true sense of the word, and the dissenters themselves were politicians rather than religious men.

In the course of the eighteenth century, however, Wesleyan Methodism arose from the midst of the Church of England as a protest against its worldliness. It spread with greater rapidity among the dissenters, for whom the future world had always remained more real and more significant than for the Anglicans who were a favoured body in the state, and whose clergy, possessed of the goods of this world, considered the ministry as a career rather than as a mission and a service. In the nine-

teenth century the wave of other-worldliness, swollen in volume, had gathered sufficient momentum to sweep beyond its original limits, and even the Established Church became engulfed. But it always remained a movement that received its impulse from below, which is unnatural in an aristocratic country like England. Well before the end of the century the wave had spent itself, and the English were once more on their way towards a period when the interests of life before the grave were first in the minds of men.

I have so far tried to give as little place as possible to historical considerations, and to present a picture of the English as they strike me now. But the religion of the English cannot at any moment be considered as a static phenomenon. It is subject to a continual motion, which, if it could be graphically represented, would take the figure of a series of waves of uneven height and length.

Can a nation that is always either in the trough or on the crest of a religious wave be called fundamentally religious? The scales of the balance on which the English weigh their present life against the hereafter are never in a stable relationship. By definition the second scale should be more heavily loaded. The very oscillations of the scales reveal uncertainty if not fickleness. The English have often been called a materialistic nation. The truth of this assertion depends on the sense one wishes to give to the word "materialistic." If it implies that the English lack idealism, that they are a nation of self-seekers and mammon worshippers, the accusa-

tion is utterly unfounded. The Quixotes of Europe, who have a passion for picking the chestnuts out of the fire for other people, are not materialists. If it is intended to imply that the English are not a metaphysical nation, that life before death is the only thing that really moves their practical minds, and that they live in the present, we stand before an altogether different proposition. The life of to-day matters immensely and almost exclusively to the English, but it is a life full of loyalties, full of devotions, full of all the things which, notwithstanding their lack of aesthetics and of intellectualism, make them such charming and fascinating beings.

The English have no fundamentally religious nature and when, to revert to my previous image, they are on the crest of a religious wave, they are unnatural. They are then like the Welsh preacher in Borrow's *Lavengro*, who believed himself guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, and whose religion consisted in moaning and beating his chest and calling others to salvation while he was waiting to be despatched into the eternal fire.

Another proof of the lack of interest taken by the English in the life after death, and of the weakness of the link that unites them with the other world, is their religious tolerance. Whatever may be said about the beauties of tolerance, it is really incompatible with religious conviction. The man who genuinely believes himself in possession of the formula of salvation and of the true recipe according to which divinity must be worshipped cannot in the natural course of things allow others to go about thees vital

matters in a different way. The instinct of a man who has the complete knowledge which is faith is to impose his knowledge upon others. If Papal sacramentalism is wicked, it must be eradicated: for it endangers defenceless souls. If God has manifested the desire to be worshipped with lit candles, by the burning of incense and the pomp of ritual, He must hate the organless corrugated-iron chapels where He is invoked in a manner repellent to His preferences. The faithful who have heard His command must wish to raze to the ground these unsightly houses of iniquity.

At the end of each Armistice-silence the rare dissenters are molested by the orthodox who emerge from their two minutes of meditative self-communion. The annual act of patriotic conformity is a sacred reality to the bulk of the nation. Sexual heterodoxy or conjugal infidelity is frowned upon and branded. But then all deviations from chastity hurt the average Englishman, whose repressions have engendered a mass of complexes. Communists are treated without tolerance, because they do not respect property, the most fundamental institution of English society. Ill breeding, the doing of a thing which is "not done", eccentricity such as the display of culture or of intellectual qualities in the course of conversation, are visited with social ostracism. But whether a man professes that he will be saved by his deeds or by his faith is a matter of indifference. An Englishman who believes that he belongs to a Church outside which there is no salvation and one who holds latitudinarian views which open wide

the gates of Heaven can work together harmoniously at the affairs that really matter, because both stand firmly rooted in that world where Achilles thought the condition of a slave preferable to that of a king in the realm of the dead.

To-day the English stand in the trough of a wave deeper than any they have yet known in the course of their agitated religious history. Few will be inclined to doubt this assertion. "A boy of fourteen", says Mr. M. L. Jacks, Head Master of Mill Hill School, "instead of going to church with his parents on Sunday morning, motors with his father, the boy driving, to a neighbouring golf-course, and beats his father there, which in no point of view is particularly good for the boy. He is apt to get his values wrong" (*Evening Standard*, December 30, 1927). Of a class of twenty-two boys, said the same head master, only two had heard of Elijah. Everywhere rises the complaint about empty pews and empty churches. Youth is ignorant of religion, middle-age is indifferent, while the women, in many countries the last refuge of religious fervour, have become as estranged from the supernatural as men. The younger generations do not read their Bibles. Life has become so varied and so full of scientific marvels that religion is no longer needed as a food for fancy and imagination.

Notwithstanding these definite tendencies, and notwithstanding the complaints of the clergy, plenty of people still attend divine service. It is sufficient for a popular paper to "boost" a preacher for his church to overflow, on the following Sunday, with

seekers after novelty, who are as ready to listen to a Catholic monk as to an unbending Calvinist, provided both are eloquent and fashionable. But what about the religious sense of these people? They go to church on Sunday, but they do not dream of allowing the claims of the after-life to influence them. The religion that only manifests itself on the Sabbath is carefully kept out of the routine of the other six days of the week. The ethics of these people are not Christian. Self-interest, modified by family feeling, tempered by generous impulses and canalised by convention, is their only guide.

To-day the sense of other-worldliness is a rarity in the Church of England. A man like Lord Hugh Cecil stirs the imagination of his contemporaries to such an extent that they find it almost impossible to mention his name without calling him "the great churchman" or "that deeply religious Englishman". The spirit of the Church of England is first and foremost institutional. Its subordination to the state is an admission of the subordination of the next world to the world of the living. Parliament and the Union Jack occupy a larger place in the heart of churchmen than the Cross and the Bible.

In the minds of the leaders of the official Church, a barren obstinacy has taken the place of the mystic sense of communion with the supernatural. They block the road to progress by their attitude to divorce reform, birth-control and sexual education. They are the people who uphold the fantastic conception that divorce should be the reward of the unimpeachable, deserving, and wronged party. They

are the people who, unable to resist any longer the popular demand for the abolition of such illogical impediments to marriage as the relationship with a deceased wife's sister, take their revenge by preventing marriage with a deceased wife's niece. The mind of the bishops is the last stronghold of the anti-logicism of nineteenth-century England.

While discipline, especially where it can be imposed upon members of the public who are not members of the Church, and matters of anti-ritualistic punctilio can still stir the embers of faith in the hearts of bishops, mere questions of doctrine rarely arouse their interest. A priest of whom no one, least of all himself, knows what he believes, can continue to preach undisturbed. This is the toleration which is incompatible with true religion. True religion may, for all I know, be the bane of humanity. There is little doubt that men are happier when they frankly live their mortal life for what it is worth. When they do, they are honestly irreligious. When they live their lives, indifferent to the supposed claims of the next world, but without ridding themselves of the prohibitions based upon principles which they reject, they are English.

True religion can still be found among Nonconformists. To what extent I should not dare to guess. But among them also there are many Sunday-worshippers, more intent on preventing other people from enjoying themselves on the Sabbath than on allowing their everyday existence to become attuned to the claims of the next world. The religion of many religious people savours more of sexual repression

with its attendant evils than of a genuine apportioning of the claims of the world and of the spirit. But whatever the amount of religion that has remained alive among Nonconformists, it must be remembered that, in the aristocratic scheme of life of the English, Nonconformity takes second place. A gentleman is a member of the Established Church even if he believes in none of its official tenets. To be a Nonconformist is, socially, no more than a next-best. Even a Catholic, though somewhat odd, is more truly a gentleman than a dissenter can ever be admitted to be.

The Catholics of England are, from every aspect, in an exceptional position. They are, to a remarkable degree, influenced by Irish thought, which means foreign thought. Their attitude to marriage proves that they do not admit the claim of the state to undisputed supremacy. They are readier than their fellow-countrymen of other religious denominations to admire and to admit what is foreign, and to criticise many things English. On the other hand, there is much about the English Catholics that surprises their foreign co-religionists. To marry a Protestant is not for them an act of horror and a mortal sin as it is for Catholics in Holland. Indeed, the Catholic clergy are perfectly prepared to give their blessing to mixed unions in exchange for an undertaking that the children will be brought up in the Catholic faith. I remember the case of a continental Catholic resident in England who decided to return to his Church after long peregrinations among the infidels. In the course of his confession he told the priest that

he possessed many books that were on the Index, and that he was very reluctant to part with them. "I should not worry about that", said the confessor. "In this country we are not guided by the *index librorum prohibitorum*."

Even in their attitude to the state—at least according to one Irish resident—English Catholics are not as pure as they ought to be. Preaching at St. Walburga's Church at Shipley on October 20, 1929, Father John Buggy, senior curate of St. Bernard's Church of the Sacred Heart, Halifax, declared: "Offend whom I may, I am one of those who believe in saying what I think, and I believe that our English Catholic puts his country before his Church, whereas in Ireland the faith has never taken the second place. The abominable Reformation was due to country coming first" (*Manchester Guardian*, October 21, 1929).

The Catholics have a thorny problem within their own Church, that of the converts from Protestantism, who, urged by a spirit of true other-worldliness, seek refuge in the bosom of what, with a rare prophetic foresight, the Fathers have called "Our Holy Mother the Church", in order to dream out their *Mutterleib Phantasie* and heal their complexes. But these converts never become genuinely absorbed. Before being Catholics they are and remain converts. They consort with converts, they rejoice with them over new conversions, and protect and help each other with a goodwill which they do not display towards true-blooded Catholics by birth and descent. And the original believers do not always feel as charitable to their new brethren as they ought to be.

Let us listen once again to that eloquent and outspoken critic, Father Buggy. In the sermon from which I have already quoted, he describes converts as "only fair-weather Catholics who have come over for obvious reasons". "A life-long Catholic", he declares, "cannot be beaten out of the Church with a blackthorn stick, but fifteen out of twenty converts will find any excuse for falling away from the Church, and I do not agree with high ecclesiastics that the converts are those who are carrying on the work of the Church and ought to be specially looked after. Look after the born Catholics", concluded Father Buggy, "and leave the converts alone. They will always find a reason for crawling away from the Church."

There are some superficial phenomena which seem to contradict the view that the English are not very religious. How can the heat generated by the Prayer Book controversy be explained otherwise than by the existence of a deep religious sense? There is at once a considerable difficulty in the way of this objection. It is a striking fact that many of the people who took an active part in this religious quarrel were utterly indifferent to religion or were members of communities other than the Church of England. Mr. Saklatvala, a Parsee, and at that time a Communist Member of Parliament, went into the lobby against the Prayer Book measure. He has since made it known that he acted in deference to innumerable requests received from his constituents. Why did the Communists who sent him to Westminster object so strongly to a modification in the

Anglican ritual? The Comintern does not favour institutional religion. But the North Battersea Communists are Englishmen before being Communists. And as Englishmen they share the national prejudices against Popery. They are like the Catholics before the Reformation, Anglican in outlook, national and anti-Roman, and they go in fear of the Scarlet Woman. When Mr. H. G. Wells, who was brought up a strict Nonconformist, told his mother that he had become an atheist, she wept. Then she said: "I'm glad at least you did not become a Roman Catholic." It is this frame of mind which explains the opposition to the new Prayer Book. It may consecrate the changed outlook on marriage, and liberate the Church of a handicap in its competition with the registrar's office. But it opens the door a little wider to the reservation of the sacrament and to other popish superstitions. The controversy was political, scarcely, if at all, religious.

The fervour of Anglo-Catholicism is equally no proof of the existence of a true religious spirit. Anglo-Catholics may toy with the idea of union with Rome. But in reality their main interest resides in incense, liturgy, candles, vestments and choirboys. The Anglo-Catholic is primarily an artist, and in that sense he is a true Englishman of the old stamp that has almost been eradicated by the nineteenth century. He seeks beauty, emotion and ecstasy, and wants to re-introduce them into a world which Puritanism has left cold and ugly.

The cathedrals built by Protestantism since the English became converted to iconoclasm freeze

one's heart. A visit to St. Paul's Cathedral, after a visit to Westminster Abbey, will explain what I mean. But the artistic misdeeds of creative Protestantism are as nothing compared with the results of Protestantism in its destructive aspect. I do not know of a more desolating spectacle than that of a church perverted from its natural use, the exercise of the Catholic cult, pagan, pompous and glorious, to worship according to pure Protestant practice. St. Albans Cathedral, without statues or ornaments, gropes for a fig-leaf to hide its nakedness. When one enters, one feels like pulling one's hat deep over one's ears for fear of the icy blast that meets one.

It is not surprising that there are still some people in the Church of England who hate the chill of Puritanism and Calvinism. Where there is a vivid, burning faith, even the contents of four bare walls disfigured by an odd, unsightly pulpit may give some warmth. But where the heart dwells in the world, narcotics are required if worship is to preserve any hold at all upon the human heart. Moreover the English are naturally inclined towards religious ritualism, and the Catholic worship with its perfect ritual thoroughly agrees with English preferences once it is dissociated from Popery. The provisional delights the English, who are therefore made for Anglo-Catholicism, which moves for ever towards Rome without getting there. There is a good cleric, somewhere in the North of England, who, obedient to the precepts of his bishop, does not burn incense during divine service. But every Saturday night he creeps into his church and swings a burning censer,

in a pathetic attempt to give to the next day's service a little of the atmosphere which lifts up the hearts of the faithful into the immaterial sphere that can be reached only by artificially produced ecstasy.

Sir Thomas Browne long ago avowed that liking for the externals of religion which forms the main attraction of Anglo-Catholicism and which has moved a Nonconformist like Dr. Orchard to introduce strange rituals into his church, the King's Weigh House, and into the hearts of his congregation of dissenters. In his *Religio Medici*, Sir Thomas Browne has said: "I am, I confess, naturally inclined to that which misguided zeal terms superstition: my common conversation I do acknowledge austere, my behaviour full of rigour, sometimes not without morosity; yet at my devotion I love to use the civility of my knee, my hat, and hand, with all those outward and sensible motions which may express or promote my invisible devotion. I should violate my own arm rather than a church, nor willingly deface the name of saint or martyr. At the sight of a Cross or Crucifix I can dispense with my hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of my Saviour: I cannot laugh at but rather pity the fruitless journey of pilgrims, or contemn the miserable condition of friars: for though misplaced in circumstances, there is something in it of devotion. I could never hear the Ave Maria bell without an elevation, or think it a sufficient warrant, because they erred in one circumstance, for me to err in all, that is, in silence and dumb contempt; whilst therefore they direct their devotions to her, I offer mine

to God, and rectify the errors of their prayers, by rightly ordering mine own. At a solemn procession I have wept abundantly, while my consorts, blind with opposition and prejudice, have fallen into an excess of scorn and laughter."

Is it possible, with all these data before us, to risk a prophecy as to the future of religion in England? Having broken the *consigne* and looked into the past, we may perhaps risk a glance at the future. We must for that purpose remember the profound difference between religion in England and religion abroad. To foreigners, religion is a thing that matters. They either accept it wholeheartedly and regulate their lives in accordance with the supposed requirements of the after-life, or they reject religion utterly and pay it the compliment of excluding it from their existence. The English are fundamentally indifferent to religion, indifferent to such a degree that they are prepared to ignore its essence while upholding its externals. Over this bedrock of indifference pass alternations of religious fervour and practical unbelief. What has happened before may happen again. A disillusioned generation may return to its empty churches, immerse itself in ritual and worship, and pay to its gods the lip-service which they received from its grandfathers. But meanwhile the Established Church will remain, a function of an omnipotent and tolerant state (headed by a King who, in Scotland, is the head of a Church with entirely different doctrine and practices), the refuge of social prejudice, of empty form, and of real gentlemen, a rock indeed in a sea of revolutionary change.

VIII

GROWN-UPS

The political instinct acquired by the English safeguards them from the effects of the crisis of democracy, while the genius which has conceived the British Empire has found the sole solution of the crisis of peace

The War to end War and to make the World safe for Democracy has left Europe faced with two big problems: the acute crisis of democracy and the chronic malady of peace. The manner in which the English are coping with these two problems shows that, for all the difficulties they are experiencing with their adolescent selves, they are, with regard to their public life, adults endowed with a perfect and happy balance.

It is a remarkable fact that, all their aggressive nationalism notwithstanding, the majority of European nations unblushingly copy from one another

the worst features of the international campaign against personal freedom. Serbia's national pride does not prevent it from naturalising the Mussolinism of its hated Italian neighbour. Spanish generals helped Don Alfonso to introduce into their country the Hohenzollern system discarded by the Prussians, and Germans are copying the methods of Maurras and of the Fascists. There is nothing autochthonous about the ravings of the international of the Swastika.

The revulsion from representative government has spread to almost the whole European continent. The Proteus of Fascism takes the shape of bullying hero-worship in Italy, of royal absolutism in Spain and in Yugo-Slavia, of an intermittent dictatorship in Poland, and of the *de facto* kingship of a fleetless admiral in Hungary; in Finland, in Lithuania, in the Balkans, it exists in forms which elude the capacity of ordinary nomenclature. Germany and Austria have their powerful anti-democratic organisations and even in France there are people who dream of a dictatorship. Level-headed Holland itself is not without some academic minds which discreetly preach the new order. A recently created review, calling *Leiding* (i.e. Guidance), edited by several well-known writers, has proclaimed in its prospectus that there is a need everywhere for "the supremacy of the organic, the subordination of self-seeking to function". New forms, it is argued, are especially needed in political life. "Considering the group as being that which for the personal life of individuals is provided by the family, we believe that the shaping of live groups—which develop in

the tension of mutual struggle and mutual co-operation, and which recognise their function as the reason of their existence—provides the necessary foundation for a society which is functionally ordered from the social as well as from the political point of view, and we further believe that no political system in these days can fulfil its purpose, if it does not see that it must be its task to put this principle into practice, and does not already adequately embody this task in its own structure" (*Leiding*, January 1929).

After due and careful observation we are bound to conclude that, however carefully steered, this phraseological three-decker has set sail for the port of state-syndicalism, functional administration, organic democracy, or whatever name one wishes to give it. The unacademic, crude and straightforward terms of Fascism and dictatorship would of course be indignantly repudiated by its pilots. It is not surprising that some of the men who hold these views also propound the doctrine that an ill-governed minority has the right to impose its will upon the majority. The practical difficulty of this doctrine is that it is the minority itself which at a given moment must decide whether it is ill governed. But every intelligent man who does not happen to be a governor himself belongs to an ill-governed minority. There is no government but bad government, and anarchism alone is logical. It is because continentals have not yet learned that the rational is usually unreasonable that they are still searching for the finally logical system of government.

The Fascist who discards revolvers and bombs

because, since the consolidation of his revolution, the firing-squad has taken their place, and takes up the pen in defence of the new régime; and the Dutch professor who dreams of an aprioristically constructed corporative state which will apply his own private theories, are both logicians. Of the two, the Fascist has at any rate the merit of reasoning by induction. They call their state an "organic democracy" and they forget that the same Georges Sorel has given the impulse to Sovietism and to Fascism, and that both Lenin and Mussolini were at one time assiduous readers and passionate admirers of his *Réflexions sur la Violence*. There is between Sovietism and Fascism only the difference which exists between the Russian "soul" and the Italian variety of the Latin temperament. The first murders in the mass, the latter in detail. The Slav kills and tortures for an idea, the Italian, who has not broken with Europe and lives under the eye of a world public-opinion to which his vanity is not insensitive, brutalises his victims in the fever of his craving for power. Both absorb the new generation by means of a vitiated system of education, and while the Russian destroys his icons, the Italian dresses his madonnas and his saints in a black shirt, a difference of method rather than of aim. "Organic democracy" maintains itself only by violence, by terrorism, by trumpery elections and by the starvation of its opponents. It requires armies of informers and of policemen. It distorts the minds of its victims and of its friends. It only appeals to those outsiders who prefer reliable time-tables to reliable people.

The reason of the great betrayal of freedom among nations with little political genius, and of the dangerous speculations that are fashionable among the reactionaries and the super-nationalists in more enlightened countries, is that they have witnessed a very definite failure of democracy, or rather, of the system of government which has been dubbed democracy. For outside the Greek city-states it is doubtful if democracy ever existed. Government of the people, by the people, for the people, would have been impossible even in the Greek city but for its exiguous size and the institution of slavery. The renowned medieval democracies were rank oligarchies. In the modern world democracy is bound to be a sham, because the citizens are unknown to each other and unable to check in detail the activities of their unwieldy administrative machine.

Take the example of the French, the least badly governed "democratic" nation of the Continent, if one excepts the small kingdoms of North-western Europe where by a mysterious process of history men have learned to look at life through spectacles that are almost free from distortion. The fond illusion that they are governing themselves has led the French into queer aberrations. In France, a member of the Chamber of Deputies is genuinely expected to represent the interests of his constituents. He is doomed therefore to eternal agitation in favour of regional and even of individual requirements, in a way which inevitably brings him into conflict with the broader interests of the country as a whole. In terms of actual

practice this means jobbery, intrigue, *tripotage*. It leads, moreover, to extreme instability, because the deputy can never be as loyal to his party as would one who had been returned to support a national programme instead of local demands.

The Dutch experiment in democracy is even more startling. There the belief that Parliament must be a miniature image of the whole country has led to a completely logical method of proportional representation, in other words, to *hara-kiri* of the representative system. The Lower Chamber is such a faithful picture of all currents of opinion that after a general election only about four per cent. of the seats are re-shuffled. The result is a decrease of interest in public affairs, and the indefinite tenure of office by a coalition of reactionaries, conservatives, and radicals who happen also to be either Protestants or Catholics.

The parliamentary system is not in itself the cause of the crisis of internal politics in Europe. There is a crisis of democracy only because democracy is another name for Utopia. Utopia, not democracy, is standing on its trial. But for generations men have been in the habit of connecting ideas of freedom, tolerance and public decency with the name of democracy. And now, together with the parliamentary system and so-called democracy, these principles also are in jeopardy. It is because, except in the thought of those who do not matter or in the mouths of those who do not speak the truth, there has been no confusion between parliamentarianism and democracy in England, that England and the

countries of the United Kingdom which have been allowed to share its political life, and the countries of the British Commonwealth which have copied it, are not in the throes of a Sovietist or Fascist crisis.

The English possess a special system of government which is based on their pluralistic system of life. They are not animated by a pernicious desire to reduce everything to its plainest and final form, even less to detect one final cause for everything. Their King may be, in theory, the sole fount of power. But in fact power resides elsewhere. First and foremost among the powers that be is the Civil Service. Anonymous, safe in their quasi-permanent appointments, carefully picked, although there has been a lowering of standards since the war in certain directions, its members are efficient and devoted to their task. One need not believe that they are really the best in the world, better than or even as good as the permanent officials of Germany, Holland or Denmark. But everyone who knows them will agree that to persons who are neither "aliens" nor telephone subscribers they are invariably helpful and courteous. Even the "alien", if he is well-dressed, or the telephone subscriber, if he makes a personal approach, may count upon understanding and goodwill. English Civil Servants definitely leave the best of their continental colleagues behind them in their absolute lack of professional caste-bias.

These silent and efficient workers carry the main burden of the task of government. They are, however, not supreme. The very brave and sufficiently

wealthy can contest their decisions before fearless and incorruptible courts of law. And to a certain extent the Civil Service shares its power with the Government, which is a body of persons selected by a gentleman who is acceptable to the King and who can rely on a majority of votes in the course of vital parliamentary divisions. It is impossible to determine the actual proportion of power held by the Government and by the Civil Service. It varies to a certain extent. Undoubtedly, the executive alone has the right to initiate policies, but in how far it initiates them only after consultation with the Civil Service, in how far it can ever free itself from the tutelage of permanent officials, is uncertain. When a minister has personality or experience, when he is a Curzon, his share of administrative power is undoubtedly less exiguous. Under Labour Governments the share of the Civil Service is larger than under other régimes. But always, in case of a real and definite clash, it is the will of the Government which prevails, and responsibility for the actions of civil servants lies with the Government of the day.

Three different checks exist upon the actions of the Government. The first is, naturally, the tradition of the Civil Service, whose permanent members are usually better acquainted with the administrative task than the temporary and titular heads of the ministries. The next check consists in parliamentary control, which is mainly exercised through questions put to members of the executive. Parliament is a body of persons divided into two Chambers or

Houses. The House of Lords consists of a variable number of persons elevated to the peerage through heredity or other haphazard methods, and the House of Commons is composed of some 600 representatives, elected by a group, not necessarily a majority, of voters in constituencies that are equal neither in size nor in population. The constituents are usually, though not always, given the freedom of voting for one among two or several candidates for parliamentary honours. Their vote, however, has generally little to do with the future parliamentary achievements of the successful candidate. Votes are given on the strength of previous achievements, of the candidate's promises for the future, or of the declared intention of the party to which he belongs. Now, past achievements have little to do with future performance. Mr. Snowden of The Hague was also the Mr. Snowden of the Independent Labour Party of 1916. Mr. Lloyd George of December 1918 was the Mr. Lloyd George of the Boer War. As for promises, the public lobby of Westminster is strewn with broken ones. As soon as the new member reaches Parliament, he must listen to the voice of the Party Whip, not to that of his constituents. He remains a perfectly free agent, at least as far as the latter are concerned. And as regards the intentions of the candidate's party, it must be remembered that, powerful though it be, the caucus of the party to which the head of the Government belongs does not govern the country. The third check upon the activities of the Government is that exercised by public opinion. It is made known by petitions, by

gatherings, and by the Press. In how far the Press represents public opinion, moulds it, or has any relation to it, is a matter for speculation. It is not easy to gauge the feelings of the vast electorate of to-day.

At any time, of course, the House of Commons can, by an adverse vote, compel the Government to resign. Party discipline, however, makes such an occurrence extremely rare. Similarly, public opinion is given, once in the course of several years, the power of exercising a direct though negative influence upon the policy of the Government. The main reason that renders the verdict of the electorate highly unreal is that only a few simple issues are put before it. All those that arise after the verdict has been given are settled in a way which accords with the general trend of thought of the supporters of the executive. England, therefore, cannot be said to be a country governed by its own people. The people's only political privilege is that of expressing, at intervals, their determination not to be governed for some time to come by people holding the general views of the executive that is in power at the time the electorate is consulted.

We have seen already that government by the people is an impossibility in a modern country. Neither would it be a desirable thing. Unable to govern their own individual lives, most people are absolutely incapable of governing those of others. The task of government is difficult and specialised. Genuine democracy would mean the rule of the incompetent and of the selfish. Parliamentary govern-

ment is the rule of the competent and of the ambitious. Competence is provided by the Civil Service, ambition by the politicians. And ambition is not necessarily harmful: those it inspires try to avoid obloquy.

The English system of government may therefore be called a dictatorship modified by the free expression of public opinion and by the intermittent veto which is the only actual power possessed by the bulk of the nation. Such a system ensures stability to the state. The fact that normally most power resides with the Civil Service explains why the performances of the different political parties and even the parties themselves show a striking sameness. All of them contain vastly divergent elements; they are all realistic and fundamentally in agreement about the basic principles of public life. There was a time when the Labour Party seemed to be inspired by totally different conceptions. But a spell of governmental experience soon put an end to its revolutionary tendencies. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's faith in the permanent civil servants of the Foreign Office is greater than that of any of his predecessors. This Liberal, who was always far too enlightened to be a revolutionary, sniffed the air of tradition that hangs over Downing Street, and felt happy. With the support of the Conservatives, he constructed cruisers against the strong opposition of the Liberals who, having lost office and Mr. Churchill, could afford to return to their Cobdenite faith. One party will place the emphasis upon the rights of property, another upon those of the indi-

vidual. The state will occupy a larger portion of the attention of one than of the others, progress may be very slow or a little less cumbersome, but progress there will always be, and security and freedom.

The English system naturally takes much for granted. It pre-supposes a sense of public decency in the governing and in the governed. It implies trust and moderation in many directions. Just as the Royal power in theory remains absolute, but is trusted to submit to every traditional limitation, so the power of bureaucracy and of the government is expected not to go beyond the bounds which, although they were never codified, are nevertheless clearly defined in the public consciousness. The tradition of free criticism, which enables any citizen to dissociate himself from the acts of an executive which he is powerless to remove, and the personal responsibility of all members of the executive for their own acts and for those of their theoretical subordinates, is of greater value to the individual Englishman than the nebulous democracy of those continentals who have not yet passed to a dictatorial régime. For it is only where freedom exists that individuals can eventually grow into full adult shape and become genuine and complete human beings.

Moreover, the English system is the only one that is natural. It is the only one to which the well-known comparison between the social and the human bodies can apply. The really healthy body cures any wound that is not mortal by its own vitality, and avoids harm by the blessed gift of pain which teaches it to know the things by which it is hurt. When they

have learnt wisdom through pain and discomfort, the English can reject, at the first general election, the governors who have served them ill. They can be ruthless enough when applying their instinctive remedy, as the landslides which sometimes take place on such occasions prove. As for the minorities which deem themselves badly governed, they can air their grievances in a thousand ways. They need not resort to violence. The sense of decency, which is bred by freedom, and by freedom alone, enables their fellow citizens to distinguish the genuine grievance from the whimperings of the freak. It is because of this that dictatorship, either from the Left or from the Right, has little hope of success among the English. Communism has no attraction for the matter-of-fact, freedom-loving and realistic English workman. And what of Fascism? It is true that Sir Austen Chamberlain is a great admirer of the new Italy and of Mussolini.[1] But then he is a typical English gentleman, for whom that axiom of logic, the principle of contradiction, so dear to the continental mind, does not exist. He has not yet discovered that a wall cannot, at the same time, be white and black. An attractive smile and a pretty gift for after-dinner oratory are ample compensation for his lack of lucid thought. This is why he was able, during his Foreign Secretaryship, to give his active, steady and simultaneous support to the Consulta and to the Quai d'Orsay. Such men are not dangerous.

Nor am I thinking of the burlesque antics of a

[1] And that his portrait adorns Mussolini's "study."

few misguided bank clerks who parade Hyde Park in black shirts. They are of no more moment than the vagaries of the man-woman who occupied an exalted position in their corps. Mr. Winston Churchill is in another category. He is intelligent. But then his mother was an American. He can look ahead, and from the past he only cares to remember military history and the life of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. He is public spirited in the sense that he has no selfishness and is as devoted to his class as a Japanese to his house. He hates popular government, unless it is hedged round by such securities as will ensure the privilege of the ruling order. He is ruthless, and treasures only those prejudices which he chooses to possess. Mr. Churchill loves war and loves violence. I once had the good fortune to be his neighbour at the performance of a war play called *The White Château.* He was thrilled by the war scenes, rejoiced in the realistic rendering of the whining and the bursting of shells and of the insolent prattle of the machine-guns. With obvious interest and understanding he talked tactics and military organisation with his companion. Before the great boom of war plays and war novels, he was an illustration of the fact that their success need not have been due to horror of war or to the desire to prevent its repetition. Devoured by a perpetual *besoin de faire*, unable to satisfy it except in side-shows like Gallipoli, Russian guerilla wars and the organisation of gentlemen in plus-fours for general-strike-breaking, he is waiting for the day. Will his day arrive? Will he be another

Lord Paramount, differing only from Mr. Parham, the child of Mr. H. G. Wells's fancy, by the fact that he has brains? I do not believe it, since Englishmen still form the backbone of the British army. If a Communistic England is unthinkable, a Fascist England may be called highly improbable. The main obstacle in Mr. Churchill's way is that Fascism is a system and that England is England.

. . . . .

I mentioned as the second characteristic of post-war Europe the chronic malady of peace. The international anarchy of to-day differs from that of before the war only in this respect, that while the earlier war-mongers listened to peace talk at The Hague in order to please the Czar of all the Russias, their successors talk peace at Geneva in order to spite the U.S.S.R. The League of Nations has been unable to restrain Polish depredations in Lithuania or Italian aggression in Greece. It is, at present, mainly an office for the international exchange of information, and it is bound to remain so as long as the vision of human beings remains limited by the conception of the sovereign state. Since the dark ages, all human progress has been made by the widening of the units to which men give their allegiance. The city has been merged into the region, the region into the principality, the principality into the petty state, the petty state into the modern state. This process continued into the nineteenth century, when the small German states coalesced into the German Empire. The widening process was preceded and prepared

by economic expansion. Direct production for the customer became regional economy, and the limits of the city-state burst under the pressure of this growth. Provinces overflowed into neighbouring provinces. Trade was ever impatient of frontiers and restrictions. But at last the limits of the modern state were reached, and a new idea prevented the continuation of the natural parallelism. The conception of the sovereign state had been born, and the state became in the eyes of mankind a definitely shaped entity, incapable of error and free from the dictates of ordinary morality. Trade might become world-wide, but the divine state remained strictly limited in space.

Meanwhile, the early nineteenth century identified nationality and the state. By so doing, it caused the nation to become interested, to the same extent as the government, in the honour of the state. The state henceforth provided the limit to the loyalties, but also to the sense of humanity, duty and decency of the citizens. It is this feeling, intensified by the reactionary movement of the twentieth century, which has parcelled out economic units into puny national states, that stands in the way of international peace. As long as homicide is permitted in certain circumstances for the good of the state, as long as robbery for the benefit of the state remains honest and honourable, there is no hope for a world comity.

It is an impressive thought that the English have long since acquired this sense of unity which transcends nationality. Its incidence is not yet world-

wide, but it embraces a vast community of nations, and covers a commonwealth that provides the model of everything that may be expected of an effective League of Nations. The United Kingdom is itself a super-national state. Such a state Spain might have become, if she had treated the Catalans with wisdom. But continentals have not the political genius that enables rulers to look beyond the national state. Haunted by the need for uniformity within their dominions, the Kings of France did what they could to extirpate the *Langue d'Oc* as soon as they had conquered the southern half of France. Imperial Germany persecuted its Polish and French-speaking populations, and all the national states created or increased by the treaties of 1919 persecute their minorities. In the United Kingdom, the Scots and the Welsh are perfectly free nationalities. But they share, with the English, the consciousness of being British subjects, and this experience has given them, like the English, immeasurable powers of resistance. The sense of citizenship of the British Commonwealth is one further step in this direction. What other country could have withstood the gigantic trauma of 1921, when Irish rebels against the Commonwealth were deemed worthy of being parties to negotiation, and when the United Kingdom lost one of its members? The unwholesome Struldbrugs of Bernard Shaw's Utopia die from a bite in their finger. The British giant did not even stagger after the most fantastic amputation.

Let it not be said that the amputation was unreal because, now as before, Ireland remains a part of

the larger British Commonwealth. For participation in the life of this Commonwealth is something very different from participation in the life of the United Kingdom. To say that the British Commonwealth is in a stage of transition is a truism, because all things are for ever in a flux. But in this particular case the change is obvious and palpable. The things that are coming are already casting a visible shadow, while the things that are have an air of transience that can escape none but the wilfully blind. Colonies are moving towards autonomy, and autonomous territories are moving towards independence with an impetus no man can stay. There can be no retrogression. Plans for an Imperial Federation cannot materialize. While the Dominions are inferior in population to the Mother Country, they will not hand over the liberties they have conquered into the hands of a federal Parliament with an English majority. When they have grown more populous the Mother Country will not submit to government from Montreal or Canberra.

This does not mean that disruption must ensue. Before Imperial disruption can become a concrete issue, it must be wanted by those whose fate it would affect. And who wants the end of the Imperial connection? Not the South African nationalists, who have shelved the question for the lifetime of one generation. The next generation will have to deal with problems of a more concrete nature, and will have acquired the habit of looking upon the Imperial connection as something that presents no disadvantages; on the contrary, they will feel no desire

to alienate the other members of the Commonwealth by their secession. As for the Irish Republicans, the fictitious difference between them and the Free Staters will eventually be swept away by the impact with social realities. Sooner or later, the Republicans will have to form a Government, and then it will become obvious to the world that there is no more difference between them and their predecessors than there is between the unemployment policy of Mr. Thomas and that of Mr. Baldwin.

In an ever increasing measure the Imperial connection is becoming something that exists in the minds of men, and nowhere else. To say this is not in any way derogatory to the feeling which forms the real basis of the British Commonwealth. As soon as we move away from the primary functions of human beings, the preservation of life, its procreation, and the elementary economic urges, we find that things are only what we think them to be. There is no indispensable concrete factor in nationality. Language, so frequently adduced as the bond of union that forms a nation, has not succeeded in uniting the very diverse nations of Spanish America, while the Swiss, notwithstanding the lack of a common language, are unmistakably a nation. Economic interests, as we have already seen, ignore national frontiers. Not every one of the nations which formed themselves into new states after the war possesses a common tradition. Nationality is the conviction held by a population that it forms a coherent unity and that it is distinct from other such coherent unities. A nation is a population hold-

ing this double conviction, which is the essence of nationality.

Now the English hold this double conviction, and so, even more emphatically, do the Scots and the Welsh. This does not prevent them from feeling that they belong to a larger and super-national group, the British Commonwealth. The extent to which they are conscious of their membership of the larger unit diminishes the desire they might have to form for their own nation an absolutely sovereign state which has no moral obligation towards the other state-partners of the Commonwealth or towards their subjects. The sharp edge has therefore been taken from sectional nationalism. This feeling is reciprocated by the people of Australia, of New Zealand, and of the other Dominions. That language or origin is not the only source of this feeling of Imperial citizenship is proved by the fact that there are no more loyal upholders of the British Commonwealth than the French Canadians or the South African natives. No amount of Empire free-trade can ever do what has been achieved by the simple conviction, held by the ordinary citizens of the various portions of the Commonwealth, that they participate in a larger unity. No increase of local government, no tariff wall that isolates one or other of these sections, no determination to preserve neutrality in the event of war involving the other sections, can prevail against this simple idea of partnership that lives in the minds of the overwhelming majority of British citizens.

Nor need there be any apprehension that this

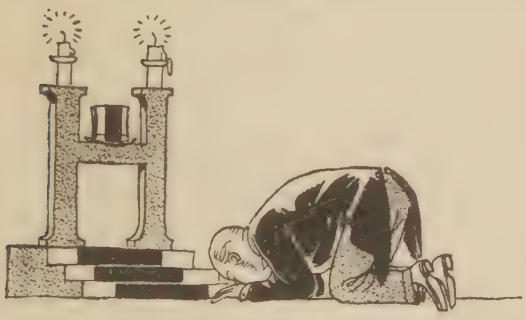
conviction will cease to exist. It is the especial contribution of the English mind to the British Commonwealth. Ever since the Act of Union the English have realised that it is possible for statehood to transcend nationhood. The broadening out of the mind, which made possible the existence of the United Kingdom, held in germ the conception which vivifies the British Commonwealth. The English never set out deliberately to extirpate the Welsh language. They have for many generations respected the idiosyncrasies of their partners in the United Kingdom and in the Empire.

It is not making too big a claim therefore to state that the British Commonwealth is the true model of the new international order. It does not do away with its component nationalities new or old. At the present stage of human development, the world cannot dispense with nationalities. Men have learned to work in them and for them, and would be at a loss if they suddenly found themselves deprived of their accustomed framework. Moreover, the feeling of nationalism is still well-nigh universal, and the only way in which it can be rendered innocuous to humanity at large is by satisfying its legitimate aspirations. But, as the brave woman whose memory is preserved by the ugliest monument in the world has said, "patriotism is not enough". The world is crying out for the unity that transcends patriotism without destroying it. Greater England points the way.

IX

THE RITUALISTIC CONCEPTION OF LIFE

In what way the English completely differ from human beings



To draw up a catalogue of differences between the English and such or such of their continental neighbours would not be a difficult matter. We have already noted a number of them, some very important such as the universal over-estimation of themselves and all that concerns them; their sexual repression with its attendant disorders, pruriency and animal-worship, and with its compensating virtues of wistful charm and a childlike delight in play and hobbies; and their truly remarkable capacity for organising their public life. We have observed other peculiarities, such as their reserve, their conversational idiosyncrasies, their table-manners,

their contempt for logic and for the things of the mind. We might mention, also, the comparative ease with which an Englishman will part with his money. Only an idealist can fail to see that the absence of meanness does not necessarily betoken a generous heart, but is more likely to result from long habits fostered by economic prosperity. Could anyone imagine an English child singing the equivalent of that wicked French ditty:

> J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière,
> J'ai du bon tabac, *tu n'en auras pas*?

The ancestral habit of hoarding, started by a hard-working peasantry, has made the Northern French close-fisted, both as individuals and collectively. The English have for ages gathered the wealth of distant colonies, while the nineteenth century brought them an increase of resources unparalleled at the time in any other country. The superficial resemblance between the economic history of England and that of the Dutch Republic at first sight appears to invalidate this explanation of the greater pace of monetary circulation in England, for the Dutch, who were at one time as wealthy as the English, are careful and economical. But if it be remembered that Dutch capital was mainly formed by saving, and by investing portions of the interest of investments, it will be seen that the national temperament was bound to be affected in a different way from that of the English.

A simple historical or psychological explanation will usually enable the observer to understand the

origin of any given characteristic of the English. As a rule, an instance can also be found without much difficulty of the possession of a similar characteristic by some other nation. If the English are reserved the Scots are not less so. The English have Humour, but so have the Irish; they are brave, but the Zulus are equally brave. Much that has been said of the sexual life of the English would apply to certain sections of the American population. It is even true that, without having achieved anything that bears comparison with the super-national British Commonwealth, the Americans have a conception of statehood that extends beyond the national state. There are reactionary thinkers who regret the disappearance of the French and the Dutch possessions in America, because it has resulted in uniformity. Uniformity may have its drawbacks, but it is the eventual fate of mankind. Small reactions like those which occurred in Europe during the second decade of the twentieth century are no more than eddies upon the wide stream of history. When America has happily passed the period of social and mental evolution which is dangerous only because it belongs to a stage where machine-guns, bombs and poison gases are even more out of place than they are in the twentieth century, she will prove that a dynamic idealism is more valuable than the shibboleths of old Europe.

Comparisons and analogies present a serious drawback. For, in the mind of the average intelligent and thinking person of to-day, they call forth a response which, although it agrees with the spirit

of our time, happens, in the case of the English, to be thoroughly out of touch with reality. The battle-cries of nationalism cannot affect the obvious fact that there is, in our Western humanity, a very large common denominator which has no regard for frontiers. Even the arrogant racialism, which believes that the Eastern world represents a type of humanity doomed forever to differ and to remain inferior to the more happily endowed Pale-face, is almost discredited, since it is being realised that the East is merely a few centuries behind the West in economic and material development. But the wise people who make light of superficial and accidental differences are inclined to attach too much importance to the analogies which must obviously exist between the English and the other members of the white race. Just as the common reserve of the Scots and of the English has led to the current mistake that there is an identifiable variety of mankind which can be called the British, these analogies have misled international thinkers into believing that there is no deep-seated difference between the English and normal humanity.

Now such is not the impression of most foreign students of the English. With the exception of the maniacs of the Nordic Race theory, all continentals who know England consider that there is more difference between the English and closely related people like the Dutch or the Norwegians, than between a Scandinavian and an Italian. I have tried to convey, in my first chapter, the impression which I formed as soon as I visited this country for the first

time, before I even understood its language, an impression which was strengthened by every year of residence, that the English stand for something that cannot be called super-human or infra-human, but is nevertheless most definitely apart from ordinary humanity. I have given a subjective description of this growing sense of difference and the name of the writers who have attempted the same task is legion. Their unanimity does not go beyond the statement of difference; the explanations they adduce are varied in the extreme. The moment for producing an explanation has not yet arrived: at present I shall merely endeavour to formulate what, in my opinion, makes the difference between Englishmen and foreigners.

Bergson speaks somewhere of "des âmes invariablement sensibles, accordées à l'unisson de la vie". It might be said that normal human beings have this faculty of being invariably responsive and of being in tune with life, provided one understands this not to refer to life as it is supposed really to be, and to mark, therefore, a capacity of infinite harmony with the nebulous absolute, the causeless cause, of which no experience has ever been convincingly communicable. If one thinks of invariably responsive beings who are in unison with life as they individually perceive it from moment to moment, then one has indeed formed an adequate mental image of the normal human being. To other human beings he responds in the manner of Shakespeare's Shylock, and to life, by groaning when he suffers, smiling when he is happy, laughing when he is elated. Anger,

love, hatred, boredom, indifference, are the natural resonances which life extracts from these well-tuned instruments. The normal human being responds to every stimulus from outside: he is essentially and thoroughly alive. And his response is always perceptible.

Now it would be impossible to say the same thing of the English. To begin with, their ataraxy, their reserve, their inarticulateness, muffle the sound of their response. But their response itself is different. It is not the natural and logical end of a chain of events. The English always seem to stand at one remove at least from life, and between their perception of its stimulus and their response to it a series of modifications arises which makes the response entirely unexpected and unrecognisable to anyone who is used to the psychology of the mere normal human being.

A distinction must be made between the peculiar reaction of the English to life and the lack of perceptible reaction of certain blunted souls like those savages whose life is particularly hard, or like the slum-dwellers of the big cities of Europe. These people seem to be numbed by suffering and by want, and to have lost some of the capacities that distinguish human beings from animals. It is not the lack of response, but its unexpected direction which makes the English so different. It would indeed be a denial of the principle of causality to assert that the English do not respond to outside stimulation, or that there is no relation between the Englishman's behaviour and the impression made

upon him by the outside world. We must therefore conclude that, between the external stimulus and the response of an Englishman, a hidden process of permutation takes place which makes the resulting response differ from what an unprepared foreign student would expect it to be.

Literary anthropologists who have studied the English have observed this phenomenon, and their observations have further led them to conclude that it is not produced in a haphazard way: the same stimulus produces the same response. In fact, the relation between the two ends of the chain of behaviour is more rigorous, more certain to justify predictions, than it is among human beings whose psychology is at all times open to the direct influence of life. There seems to be, in the behaviour of the English, a prescribed order which is lacking outside their country. Now a prescribed order of performing religious or other solemn activities is called a ritual. And no sooner have we established this little lexicographic equation than we find ourselves in possession, if not of the key to the underlying cause, at least of a satisfying explanation of the behaviour of the English.

The English go through life as though each of its moments were part of a prescribed and solemn ritual. They hold a ritualistic conception of life. And may I remark in passing that the acceptance of a ritual as something solemn does not inevitably imply its solemn performance? The English take their games with solemn seriousness, but they can laugh and joke nevertheless, even on the cricket-

field. Their ritual is not the ceremony of pomp and circumstance, but rather ceremony as seen by a village child who functions as an acolyte at Low Mass: it is quiet and familiar, even though compelling in every detail. It has the quality of the magic that pervades the life of primitive tribes. Mr. Malinowsky says somewhere that "it is the essence of magical lore that every word must be spoken correctly, without omission or alteration, every detail of the rite performed". And he adds: "In religious and magical ritual, the spoken word is conceived and felt by man to be a creative act which produces a definite practical effect."

A striking illustration of the magical force of the spoken word in the life of the English is to be found in the ceremony of introduction. Sir William Horwood, a former Chief Commissioner of Police, giving evidence before the Commission on street-offences, made a declaration to the effect that the mere fact of a man saying "Good evening" to a woman in the street ought to be a sufficient reason for his arrest. Without going to such military extremes, most English people are prepared to inflict severe social punishment upon the man who speaks to another man without having gone through the ritual of introduction. The person to whom somebody is introduced must produce a slight smile and pronounce the words "How do you do?" But these words are not to be taken in their literal sense, for they are part of the ritual. They should not be answered by a human "Very well, thank you", nor with a "Not too badly, save for a slight return of

my asthma". Until the ritual of introduction has been performed, the second person is a stranger to the first, who can therefore by definition take no interest in his health. It is laid down in the English ritual that a stranger does not exist. The answer to the ceremonial "How do you do?" is therefore an equally ritualistic "How do you do?" to which there is no further recognised response. The ceremony is over, and intercourse, with the due observation of the innumerable conversational taboos, can now begin.

A distinguished Dutchman was once invited to a dinner where Dean Inge was to be a fellow guest. The Dutchman, who was in the first stages of his English novitiate, failed to find the entrance to the dining-hall where he was expected. Meeting the Dean—and who would not recognise him even at the first encounter—he addressed him with a polite salute and asked if he might follow him, as he could not find his way into the place whither he knew the Very Reverend Gentleman was also bound. The Dean did not acknowledge his existence with as much as a glance. When, later in the evening, an introduction had taken place, the Dean was affable in the extreme. The meeting before dinner was not once referred to.

In her *Reminiscences of a Student's Life*, Miss Jane Ellen Harrison gives a description of her father, who was obviously the very embodiment of the ritualistic conception of life. He regularly attended the services of the Church of England, except on sacrament days, when he always developed an attack of lum-

bago. Once an Evangelical clergyman visited the house of the Harrisons just as they were leaving for a journey and offered an *ex-tempore* prayer for their safe return. Miss Harrison's father was too polite to protest, but as soon as he was alone with his family, he allowed his rage to show and muttered "Indecent!" The Archbishop of York, on hearing that Jane played the village organ, put his hand on her head and told her to consecrate her great gifts to God. A distinct look of annoyance passed over the father's face. A brief prayer was always said before lunch and before dinner, but he became furious when a clerical son-in-law one day attempted to say grace before breakfast. Once a somewhat High Churchman took charge of the parish while the vicar was away. He introduced new hymn-books and other novelties and placed a little cross on the communion table: "My father with his own hand swiftly and silently removed it".

This Mr. Harrison cannot have been a deeply religious man. Yet he insisted on his daughter's regularly going to church, and imposed upon his familiars certain religious performances with as much insistence as he opposed the introduction of any others beyond those he had sanctioned. To him, obviously, religious performance must have been part of the accepted scheme of things, and prayers "words conceived as a creative act productive of a definite practical effect" entirely apart from their meaning. Religion was to him the "thing that is done" and he accepted it only for this reason and not owing to any strong inclination.

This qualification applies to a number of actions and of words in the life of the English. When a lawn-tennis player grazes the net in returning the ball, he says "Sorry", although it usually means that he scores a point against his opponent. Now it is humanly impossible for the lucky player to be sorry, or for the other to believe he is. The words are sheer ritual. Eating and drinking, love-making, and perhaps even the sexual act, clothes, the choice of reading and the organisation of pleasure, the manner of spending a holiday and of killing time in a seaside boarding-house, conversation, taste, building, and the intercourse between human beings, and between human beings and animals, are regulated by ritual. Throughout the day, the Englishman performs acts and pronounces words, not because they have a significance in themselves, but because they happen to be the acts and the words which, for one reason or another, it is deemed right to perform and to pronounce.

There may be an anthropological and psychological explanation of the ritualistic conception of life. Ceremonial and magic are, perhaps, a form of transference necessitated by the innumerable repressions from which the English suffer. But at present we are not concerned with causes. We need only examine our first point, that of the effects of the ritualistic conception of life. And when we see a man like Dean Inge, the most original upholder of English traditions, who differs from his fellow-countrymen only by being fully conscious of his actions and of their motives, accept this conception

without any hesitation, and consider that its embodiment, the English gentleman, is the finest variety of mankind, we feel that it must have a tangible advantage.

The advantage of ritual is that it makes all things function with perfect smoothness. Where everything must take place in a prescribed manner, there can be no vacillation, no self-torture, no hysteria, no indecent display of feelings. Like a Royal personage whose every gesture at a function of state is regulated by etiquette, the Englishman owes to his upbringing a sense of deftness, a quick discernment which enables him always to know "what is done" and to avoid the thing that "is not done". There is no hesitation when the Englishman eats, or when he receives a toast, sitting in his chair where a foreigner in his place would gauchely stand and bow. There is no uncertainty about the way to deal with the major as well as with the much more difficult minor issues. Nor will there be searchings of heart about the ultimate reasons of one's behaviour. "Theirs not to reason why." The English ritual has no flaw. The performers are perfectly drilled.

X

TRIBAL GOD . . . OR HISTORY?

The hypothesis of a special creation of the English gentleman is here examined, and a serious objection to this fascinating doctrine is candidly mentioned

When Britain first at Heaven's command,
Arose from out the azure main.

In the previous chapters I have endeavoured to show how to an unprejudiced foreign observer the character of the English appears as something that is neither entirely admirable nor altogether deserving of condemnation, but, taken as a whole, differs considerably from that of other people. In the great unity formed by all the races and all the nations of the world, differences are but the results of geographical accidents and of the varying degree of economic and social development, which lose all

final significance once a four-dimensional point of view is adopted. What is India but a medieval Europe? Where is the difference between a native of Australia and a "Nordic" of before the Roman infiltration? Yet, in this picture of unity, the English stand out with their ritualistic conception of life as something that does not blend with the mass of humanity. The English with whom the average middle-class resident or visitor most normally enters into contact differ from other people, and are proud of the difference.

To wonder how this difference came about is as natural as to accept the fact that it cannot have always existed. Yet, apart even from the members of the British Israel League, there are to be found people who will not admit that the English character is the result of historical causation. Professor W. Macneile Dixon, M.A., Litt.D., Hon. LL.D., Regius Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of Glasgow, when delivering the Northcliffe Lectures in Literature at University College, London, in November 1929, declared that the English character does not vary, that it is not the result of historical or geographical causes, but that it is inherent in the English themselves. I am only able to quote the Professor's words from memory, and I do not know whether he will enable a larger public than the audience to which I was privileged to belong to become acquainted with his useful discovery. But I went home after hearing him with the soul-stirring impression that the English were shaped by a tribal god to his own image, since when

they walk before his face as the gentlemen of creation.

I have learned to distrust general theories in the course of my existence in England and of my studies at an English University. I felt, therefore, perfectly prepared to disregard aprioristic promptings which told me that change is perpetual in the affairs of man, that no historic phenomenon exists which is not caused by other phenomena of history, that whatever we may believe about the indetermination of individual actions, we have to accept historical determinism as the only working hypothesis which will enable us to construct the edifice of plausible historical narrative. After all, once one admits that the English are other-than-human, juxta-human, perhaps even super-human, one may as well believe that they are outside the reach of ordinary human causation. And besides, the theory of the tribal god of the English, not explicitly mentioned by the learned Professor, but definitely implied in his doctrine, provides the desired causation, and carries it moreover beyond the sphere of rationalism into that of religion, if not of mysticism. The causeless cause of Englishness may perhaps have to co-exist with other tribal causeless causes. But why should we reject the possibility of a pluralistic universe?

If established on solid grounds, the doctrine of the special creation of the English gentleman would enable me to terminate the present book at this juncture. As long as the god of the English reigns, they must remain what they are and what they were. At the most, in this *sempiternum nunc* of divine Eng-

lishness, there may be the increase for which the prophet of the Saxon god has prayed:

> God who made thee mighty,
> Make thee mightier yet!

Growth there might be, as other tribal gods declined and died or went out of business. But change—never!

Unhappily, that restless spirit of wonder, the true Mother of philosophy and the bane of foreign-bred minds, drove me onward. Supposing, I thought, that the English had, after all, not always been precisely what they are? Supposing that under the surface which attracts the foreigner's attention, there were relics of genuine humanity, of impulsiveness, of outspokenness, of weakness? Might I not, in such a contingency, venture the audacious theory that, like other nations, the English have been subject to evolution and that their character had a starting-point, a childhood, a past—that, in short, the English gentleman did not step out fully armed from the brain of the English Jove?

A ready test lay at hand. Of all the relics of the past, there is none more authentic than language. No revolutionary historian can reject its witness, no sophist can distort its value as a link with generations that have been. It lives and varies without intermission, but its change is organic, continuous and slow. The process of transmission, the playful talk of the mother to the infant experiencing the first pangs of consciousness, takes place simultaneously in every quarter, and at all hours of the day. A

sudden change in the mind or in the soul of a nation is not immediately reflected in the language, because its plasticity is only superficial, because it requires persistent and lengthy efforts for its real being to become affected. If therefore the ritualistic conception of life, the repression of passions, the contempt of intelligence and the other characteristics which distinguish the English from normal humanity were not created by a tribal god at the time of the birth of the English nation, but have grown in a normal way which it is not beyond the powers of the historian to explore, the English language must at least bear traces of a period when the English were not what they are. If, on the other hand, their language lacks outspokenness, is allussive and never direct, is obscure and involved like the clumsy efforts at utterance of people who do not cultivate the graces of the mind, then, indeed, may we adopt the theory of a special creation.

Now there occurred to my mind a remarkable colloquialism to which I had often listened without much understanding, and which I had never readily taken to using. When an Englishman wants to convey that a place is very small, or that it is so crammed with furniture that it is scarcely possible to move in it, he says "there is no room to swing a cat". I may have a painfully literal mind, but I find myself unable to interpret this saying otherwise than by visualising a person picking up a cat by its tail, and propelling it, miaowing, spitting, howling and protesting, round and round his head, until it escapes at a tangent and crashes into the wall. But such a

vision is incompatible with the animal fetichism of the modern English, which leaves in the shade anything ever practised by the ancient Egyptians. Could it be that there was a time when animals were not the dumb masters of the English, when sympathy and fellow feeling did not go out to the speechless brutes, because the English themselves were not unvocal, and when there was not the incomprehensible contradiction between animal-worship and blood-sports, because the psychology of the English had not become unbalanced by repression? In the great conflict between Professor W. Macneile Dixon, M.A., Litt.D., Hon. LL.D., and History, a crucial point had indeed been reached. Did the usual processes of growth and of change after all apply to the English as well?

Alas for the tribal god of the English, the suspicion sown in my mind by the picture of the swinging cat was but too painfully justified. The work of that respectable institution, the R.S.P.C.A., is not older than a century. The Regency still knew bear-baiting and cock-fights, and a hundred years ago, in this country, animals were still considered to be the inferiors of human beings—just as among foreigners!

The testimony of language is not as shrill and as high pitched in every direction. But there is another vital matter in which it is equally unmistakable. If we may judge by what has been said in the chapter entitled "Not too Clever", we should expect the English language to be an almost incoherent as well as an impoverished specimen of human

speech. In a country where learning is at a discount, where knowledge is not a fit subject of conversation, where the subtleties of personality are avoided and ignored, the language must be halting, uncertain, like that of a people not burdened with culture. It is a well-known fact that the pretty and promising language of the South African Dutch does not yet lend itself to the subtleties of philosophical speculation. It lacks the imperfect tense, and has much difficulty in marshalling subordinate clauses. Cape Dutch is by no means a rude jargon. A Hollander and a South African can converse together, each in his own language, and I have never communed with my Dutch South African friends by any other method. Cape Dutch is a perfect instrument of poetic expression. But every historian, every critic, every philosopher who makes use of it has to forge his own instrument. There are therefore many ways of expressing the same idea, or of achieving its approximate formulation. Language, at all times an unsatisfactory means of utterance, becomes, when it is the vehicle of a simple and elemental civilisation, very difficult to handle, obscure, and more inadequate than when it has behind it a long tradition of intelligence and culture.

English, however, suffers from none of the handicaps which should affect the language of people whose intelligence is that of ill-tutored school children. The exceptions among the English, those who care for verbal beauty as well as for clear thought, have at their disposal a wonderfully balanced and adequate instrument, not only harmonious and full

of sonority—for these are qualities not precluded by barbarity—but supremely polished, precise, exacting and definite. In the course of my experience as a translator, I have been surprised to find that, unlike the German and the Dutch, the English language is impatient of approximation, of prolixity, and of the shameless torturing of the phrase upon the rack of completeness.[1] A plethora of restrictive and qualifying clauses introduced by tired minds, fearful of missing some shade which they sense but cannot with justice or reason produce as an independent idea, finds no place in English style. There is only one way of expressing oneself in English: the right way.

Still more striking is the absolute logic of the English language. Clearness, precision, directness, explicitness, so frequently supposed to be the exclusive prerogative of the French language, are, to a higher degree, necessary in English. French is clear, but its clearness is often superficial. Its precise formulation not infrequently hides a certain poverty of thought which becomes but a poor envelope once it is deflated of rhetoric. One can adequately summarise the leading article of a French newspaper in a few sentences if one is lucky enough to be able to summarise it at all. More exacting than the French, English dislikes elliptical methods, while

[1] The scandalous mode of writing which is so prevalent in German and in Dutch is not unavoidable. The Germans have Heine and Schopenhauer, the Dutch Multatuli. But both nations prefer the ponderousness of the incomprehensible. English too can be badly written:—Carlyle!

it has no liking for the anacoluthon. It is, in short, the language of precise and meticulous observers and reporters of facts, of philosophers who do not dwell in the clouds of metaphysics so much as upon the pasture-lands of pragmatism, of subtle psychologists who do not circumambulate by devious roads. It is the language of vigorous, clear brains, of mental adults.

The nation that now speaks the English language is therefore different from that which saw the birth, the evolution, and the formation of this language. The English have changed, and there have been days when they were other than they are now.

. . . . .

There have been sufficient obvious minor social changes to invalidate the doctrine of the immutability of the English character, without there being any need of probing deeper into the testimony of the social phenomenon which is language. Among the characteristics which almost any Englishman will claim for his nation is that of personal cleanliness. "Clean minds in clean bodies" is a slogan for schoolboys, but a very defective criterion for distinguishing God's own English gentleman from a foreigner. The difference has been highly exaggerated. Americans have a greater love of the bath than Englishmen, and there are other ways of ensuring cleanliness than that of lying down in warm water. Cleanliness, besides, is a relative notion. The Dutch author Multatuli tells of a skipper who, noticing a foreign woman diving and swimming

most perfectly, declared: "Of course, all those foreigners can swim. They've got to wash continually, because they are so dirty."[1] But the fact remains that English people attach a very great importance to ablutions. It is undeniable, however, that their ancestors held different views. Who does not remember the domestic drama of Mr. Pepys's life, when his foreign wife went to the bake-house and had an actual and real bath, whereupon she became so fastidious that she refused to lie with him until he washed himself all over with hot water? This must have been most unpleasant to Mr. Pepys, who was so unfamiliar with water that he caught a bad cold when, on a particularly hot summer's day, he paddled in the Thames water from the side of the boat in which he was being rowed home. The first Public Baths since the Middle Ages were introduced into this country in 1846, and during Gladstone's tenancy No. 10, Downing Street, had no bathroom. The bathing habit was an afterthought of the English tribal god.

No one of course could deny that there are certain characteristics which the English have possessed from time immemorial. Their national pride and their conviction that the predicate "English" implies superiority of quality are indeed most ancient attributes. It is not only in newspapers of the twentieth century that one meets with the assertion that everything English, from buns to the climate, is the best in the world. About the year 1500, a Venetian

[1] The Dutch equivalent of the word "foreigner", *vreemdeling*, means "non-Dutch" and can even be applied to an Englishman.

ambassador wrote home that "the English are great lovers of themselves and of everything belonging to themselves. They think", he continued, "that there are no other men than themselves, and no other world but England, and whenever they see a handsome foreigner, they say 'he looks like an Englishman' or 'is it not a pity that he is not an Englishman?' When they partake of any delicacy with a foreigner, they ask him whether such a thing is made in his country too."

Venetian ambassadors are extraordinarily reliable witnesses, and this description is so vivid that it bridges the centuries. I have heard, myself, in a theatre in Florence, an English lady whisper in very audible tones, when thrilled by the tenor: "Wouldn't you think he's English, dear?" More than that, my lengthy stay in England has affected me to such a degree that I once surprised myself saying to my neighbour, when a particularly charming chansonnier was performing at a *boîte* of Montmartre, these revealing words, "Looks exactly like an Englishman". For it is usually in Paris that I become most fully aware of the virtues of the English.

Two centuries after the visit of our Venetian ambassador, the Swiss, Louis de Marault, in his *Lettres sur les Anglais et les Français, et sur les Voyages*, wrote as follows: "Such as I have described this country to you, the English are extremely fond of it; they are never tired of praising it, and they prefer it to all the countries of the world, as they prefer themselves to all other nations." After the Peace of Amiens, Bonaparte sent a journalist, Jean Fiévée,

on a mission to England to study the country. Fiévée, among other things, reported that the English displayed for themselves as a nation a preference which amounted to a mania. These are the impressions of outsiders, and it would not be difficult to discover more of them. For national utterances in the same sense it is enough to glance through the pages of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The Elizabethans were like the Victorians in their unflinching belief in their absolute superiority over other people.

I have remarked before on the danger of drawing superficial analogies with other nations. It is true that the Scots also possess a sense of national superiority. But whereas the English consider themselves superior to the rest of the world, the Scots only consider themselves superior to the English. Of course, a characteristic like the special brand of patriotism of the English does not differentiate them from the rest of mankind. It is merely a particularity, an amusing trait of the same nature as those one meets in other parts of the world. Nor is it very difficult to explain. The illusion that one is in every respect better than one's neighbour can only exist if one does not know the neighbour very well. The English have lived on an island ever since they were English, and, by the time they took to travelling, self-inflation had become a national habit. It is, besides, a very healthy habit: there is nothing like having a high standard of conduct and quality.

There are other lasting characteristics of the English nation, such as their martial spirit, which, of

course, is not a monopoly. In their particular case, it can be explained by a somewhat smaller degree of imagination (for imagination is the source of prudence), by the fact that feudalism, which breeds habits of discipline and obedience, has not yet entirely disappeared from their midst, and by familiarity. War is familiar to Empire-builders. In 1914 the British army was the only one with a certain number of non-commissioned officers who had already received the baptism of fire.[1] Another lasting characteristic, I believe, is that the English have at all times been revolutionaries, but always with the proviso that deep changes did not necessitate modifications of surface. Finally, their attitude to religion, which has been examined in another chapter, has the lasting characteristic of extreme mutability which justifies the assertion that other-worldliness has not eaten into the marrow of their bones.

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It is when we come to the traits of a more striking nature, to those which make foreign visitors feel that on landing in England they suddenly enter a land strange and baffling to all their instincts, that we make the surprising discovery that they are relatively modern acquisitions. From whatever angle one looks at the past of the English nation, one is staggered by the universally human quality of its virtues and of its defects. The England of the

[1] Between 1849 and 1900, the Indian Government engaged in 110 wars and expeditions, of which 64 took place between 1878 and 1898.

Hundred Years War, of the Wars of the Roses and of the Paston letters had the permanent characteristics of England. It was nationalistic, ready to support the most unjust aggression in France, while hating the foreigner in a beautifully unenlightened way. It had the fundamentally temporal attitude towards religion of the modern English gentleman, indeed it was more irreligious even, with its lewd monks, its Machiavellian prelates, its population burdened with gross superstitions and devoid of spirituality. It did not differ from the rest of Europe and belonged entirely to its century. The terrifying, epileptic fourteenth century was peopled by neuropaths. Its cruelty and lack of restraint, its unbridled sensuality and complete absence of political balance, all these are the direct opposite of the qualities of the typical Englishman of to-day. Nor can it be argued, from the fact that the things of the mind were not held in high regard, that in this respect at least the English have not changed. Fighting knights and downtrodden villeins cannot be expected to cultivate the liberal arts. In an uncouth period one can only look for a limited number of carriers of the nation's culture, and expect that there shall be a general feeling of goodwill and helpfulness towards them on the part of those who cannot themselves contemplate the light. And after all, was this not the case in the fourteenth century? Most of the favourites of Edward IV had literary tastes. Hastings, Tiptoft, Rivers were patrons of the arts. Architecture, especially in the churches and cathedrals, bears witness to the existence of a general

sense of beauty and proportion. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, at any rate, the tribal god had not yet set out upon his special act of creation.

We have noted that the attitude of the English towards animals has undergone a radical change in the course of the last hundred years. This attitude, as we repeatedly remarked, is intimately connected with their repressed sexual life. But the English have not always differed from normal humanity in the latter respect. To trace the attitude of the English towards physical love and its manifestations in the course of past centuries would be tantamount to writing a complete *Sittengeschichte* of England, an enterprise as much beyond the scope of this work as beyond my capacity. Let me only refer to the things Chaucer could write—whether true or not—, to the Elizabethan poets, to the authors of the Restoration. And be it remembered that even the Puritans were not mealy-mouthed and had at least the safety valve of expression, even if their actions did agree with their principles. Let us remember that English novels of the first part of the eighteenth century could no more be literally translated into French than the works of Mendès, Colette, Zola, and scores of Frenchmen as well as of Germans and other continentals can to-day be rendered into English without being bowdlerised or printed in limited editions. At the close of the eighteenth century London had fifty thousand prostitutes, including the wives of artisans and others who lived partly by prostitution. We are told that French visitors were shocked at English depravity. Women who went

unprotected into the London streets were assailed with coarse jokes. And there is no need to recall the licentiousness of the Regency period. From much nearer still to the age of respectability and pruriency come tales of licentiousness in the hot-house atmosphere of the spinning-mills, and the story related in 1828 by Francis Place of a Frenchman who visited a factory in Lancashire and was told by the owner to choose any one of the working-girls with whom to spend the night. I do not wish to imply that at any time the English were abnormally sensual or sex-ridden. They enjoyed a perfect psychological balance, they were frank and human, and their broad and robust souls had ample room both for satisfaction of the senses and for idealism.

The English have not always possessed the striking political gifts they now display. So far were they, in the seventeenth century, from the instinct which makes them free and less ill-governed than the majority of human beings that foreigners spoke of them with the same superciliousness that has so often coloured outside judgements about the French of the nineteenth century. There was in both cases the same variability and the same fickleness which provide the breeding-ground of revolutions. Political insight grew slowly, like the real sense of freedom which is its mainstay, and which was developed in the age-long struggle of the citizens with Royalty, a struggle that was possible only in an island free from the dangers of invasion. And the genius that enabled the English to develop the super-national sense on which the British Commonwealth of Nations

is based was not yet born in the days when George III was allowed to lose what might have become the most glorious partner in the Empire.

Distrust of intelligence and of all that embellishes the mind has also not been a permanent blemish of the English nation. Chaucer's Squire could no more have been called an enemy of knowledge or of the muses than he could have been accused of artificial frigidity:

> With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse,
> Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
> Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
> And wonderly deliver, and greet of strengthe.
> And he had been somtyme in chivachye
> In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye,
> And born him wel, as of so litel space,
> In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
> Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
> Al ful of fresche floures, whyte and rede.
> Singing he was, or floytinge, al the day;
> He was as fresh as is the month of May.
> Short was his goune, with sleves longe and wyde.
> Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
> He could songes make and wel endyte,
> Juste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte.
> So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
> He sleep namore than dooth a nightingale.
> Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,
> And carf biforn his fader at the table.

Yet this charming young man, the son of a knight, was the social equivalent of a Sandhurst cadet! His father, the "verray parfit gentil knight", is often considered to be the first example of an English gentleman. But those who believe that they can

point to him as the first masterpiece of the god of the English forget that chivalry, with its ideal of "trouthe and honour, fredome and curteisye", was an international conception, cherished in all Christian countries, and probably, like all ideals, never realised in any of them. The young Squire is as international a figure as the Knight, and neither would find place in the scheme of things ruled by the ritualistic conception of life.

The English of the past, whose economic and social position gives us a right to expect it from them, were intelligent, used their brains, and liked all things of the mind. In 1605, on the occasion of the baptism of the heir of Philip III of Spain, an embassy of six hundred English noblemen went over to Valladolid to represent the King of England. They amused the Spanish by the way in which they rummaged through the town in search of books! In his *England under the Stuarts*, Professor Trevelyan says:

> Some idea of the solid reading of an ordinary man, not specially literary or poetical, but anxious to instruct himself, may be gathered from the following list, recommended by an old gentleman (born 1580) to his grandson, as having formed the library of his youth (Harl. Misc. ix. p. 592). After the Bible he recommends Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Sir W. Raleigh's *History of the World*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Camden's *Britannia*, "my friend, Sir Richard Baker's *Chronicle*", Xenophon's *Cyrus*, Tully's *Offices*, James I's *Basilicon Doron*. Lastly he adds: "When I was young it was a defect not to be versed in Sir Philip Sydney." Indeed while Shakespeare and even Spencer are not mentioned, the old gentleman says: "To refresh yourself with poetical stories you may take Sir Philip Sydney instead of all."

Although he had been to Cambridge, Mr. Pepys, an ordinary civil servant, was a collector and a reader of books, a critical mind and an intellectual. The creation of public schools, which at one time were schools for the public, proves that there was a keen interest in education. The social student can find so much evidence of respect for intellectualism among the English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that there is no need to elaborate this point. As for the intelligence of the race, apart from the convincing proof given by the structure and the thirst for logic of the English language, it meets the eye wherever it turns. Roger Bacon, the *doctor mirabilis* of the thirteenth century, the clearest and most methodical thinker of his age, the first intellectual to break loose from the deductive rut of the medieval schools, was an Englishman. Francis Bacon, as nimble a mind as was produced by a far more enlightened age, and one of the great reformers of modern science, was an Englishman. The most remarkable fact about both Roger and Francis Bacon is that they were entirely the product of their English environment, and that they gave expression to views and tendencies that were simmering all around them. The whole literature, and especially the poetry, of the seventeenth century abounds with instances of the keen and penetrating intelligence of the English. The intellectual influence of the eighteenth-century country-house cannot be exaggerated, while the salons of the same period could not have existed if they had not thriven upon intelligence and its intelligent appreciation.

As for the sense of beauty, is it surprising that a nation of beautiful men, placed in a beautiful country, should have possessed it to a high degree until induced to profess the ritualistic conception of life? The great social art of architecture flourished in the England that built its churches and cathedrals. Wren was a master-builder, and the Adam brothers were master-builders. The men who beautified London after the Napoleonic wars achieved gloriously things of which those who rebuilt London after the World War did not dream. The English have been one of the most musical nations of the world. The England of Elizabeth was recognised as the home of the best music of the day. Musicians would play most beautifully under the window of the stranger who stayed at the village inn. Tudor church-music had no peer, while throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth century lyrical poetry was more frequently written to be sung than to be read. Most crafts were performed to the accompaniment of folk-music of real and lasting beauty. To refer once again to Mr. Pepys, that admirable man-in-the-street who differed from his fellow-countrymen only by his blessed graphomania, so deep was his love for music that it sometimes caused him actual physical discomfort, and not only did he play several instruments, but he revealed a simple though real talent for composition. Even if during the eighteenth century it was mainly Italian music that claimed attention, *The Beggar's Opera* and the popular music that derived from it were heard until the ritualistic conception of life muted the chords of a musical nation.

As for the plastic arts, if the English had no great schools of painting and sculpture during the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, they had their primitives and the great portrait and landscape painters of the latter part of the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth centuries, who, far from being inspired by the French, exercised, in some instances, a considerable influence upon the work of those nineteenth-century French painters who were destined to lead the world into new realms of sensation and technique.

More striking still than these contrasts between the old England and the new is the difference brought about by the ritualistic conception of life. For the habit of looking at life through darkened glasses, of allowing it to strike the mind only after it has passed through a sound-proof space, of masking and repressing natural reactions to the outside world, has not always been known to the English. Old England was a country of exuberance, of *joie de vivre*, of immediate and vigorous reactions. The ebullience, the versatility of its people were truly meridional. Like all the men who imbibe life through every pore of their skin, they sank into the depths of despondency with the same suddenness with which they could work themselves into frenzies of riotous mirth. Thoughts of madness and despair would suddenly disturb their hilarious moods. Perhaps they even welcomed such contrasts, like the Romans who would drink their wine in silver vases adorned with skeletons and dead men's faces. The early seventeenth century knew these searchings of heart. A few years after Shakespeare played with

the theme of madness in *Hamlet*, Webster brought upon the scene his madmen who chanted to the accompaniment of a lugubrious clangour:

> O, let us howl some heavy note,
> Some deadly dogged howl,
> Sounding as from the threatening throat
> Of beasts and fatal fowl!
> As ravens, screech-owls, bulls and bears,
> We'll bell and bawl our parts. . . .

until their song of misery changed into a tired prayer for annihilation and rest:

> We'll sing, like swans, to welcome death
> And die in love and rest.

The English used to practise all the little gestures and courtesies of continentals which their nineteenth-century descendants gave up because they tend to diminish the distance between the individual and the outside world. The Venetian ambassador already quoted says of the English of about 1500 that they were extremely polite in their speech, and describes how they "have the incredible courtesy of remaining with their heads uncovered, with an admirable grace, while they are talking to each other". The habit of Elizabethan Englishmen of osculating whenever they met often surprised foreigners. Surely no more amusing contrast could be found to the English gentleman of the fifteenth Psalm, "that walketh uprightly", than the six hundred English noblemen who went to Spain in 1605 and whose disconcerting bookish propensities we

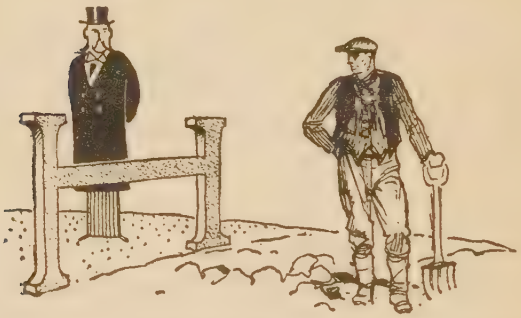
have already noted? In *The Court of Philip IV*, Mr. Martin Hume tells us of "the curious fashion they had of breaking off in their discourse—or in a pause in the conversation—and practising a few steps of a dance, the tune of which they hummed between their teeth". The same author speaking of the *cabriolas* or skipping of these gentlemen at a ball given by the King in their honour, remarks: "The passion for dancing high and 'disposedly' was at the time considered peculiarly English and Englishmen are frequently referred to in Spanish letters of the time as being naturally volatile and mercurial, in marked contrast with their latter-day descendants."

Puritanical severity was a passing phase that did not touch the deeper layers of the nation. With the Restoration, direct contact between human beings and the outer world, in so far as it had ever been interrupted, returned. The whole eighteenth century was aglow with response to outside stimulation and peopled with beings who were "invariably responsive and in tune with life". So was a good portion of the nineteenth century, which still had a glimpse of the port-sodden giants of the political arena, and saw the equally unritualistic individualities that existed in the flesh as well as in the novels of Borrow. Like William IV, their jovial sailor-king, the English of the eighteen twenties, in their highly coloured clothes, were still ordinary human beings.

XI

ENGLISH AND HUMAN

Definite vestiges of real humanity among considerable sections of the population of England and even among people who do not drop their h's



It is with the English of the ritualistic conception of life that the ordinary foreign visitor establishes contacts; upon them, if he writes his impressions of England, he must base his views and his theories. The well-to-do continental who is carried in his high-powered car to a luxury hotel in London sees a cosmopolis which differs from no other European capital. The American who goes shooting in Scotland never sees England at all. A certain Dutch magnate who built a fortune and an English country residence by speculating in an elastic or a viscous material, and impressed a young visitor by telling him: "The shouts you hear outside come from my

chauffeurs who are having a Soccer match with my cooks", knew another England that is rarely explored by foreigners. But he was not aware of it.

Books about England are written by scholars who gravitate between Bloomsbury boarding-houses and the British Museum, and by foreign journalists who become acquainted with the political world, the City, with artistic coteries, and, if they are lucky, with suburbia and the country-house where they spend a week-end. And they forget that the England they are thus able to study is not the same as that which existed for centuries; while they never suspect that there may be another England, apart from the puzzling phenomenon embodied in Colonel Bramble. Yet, throughout England, and all round the foreign visitor, lives the normal and pulsating humanity that was old England.

For it is, roughly speaking, only the portion of England's population which pronounces the letter *h* that is affected by the ritualistic conception of life, while even among those who know the art of aspiration traces remain of their natural past. It is a very remarkable thing that England is rent in twain by a social difference in language such as is probably known in no other European country, except where the upper class has adopted a foreign tongue. When I saw Mr. Sherriff's play *Journey's End* in Paris, I was struck by the fact that the speech of the mess-orderly or the ranker-officer was indistinguishable from that of the public school men. This meant the loss, not only of some excellent humour, but also of many of the deeper implications of this

striking play. The contrasts between the ritualistic conception of life of the born members of the officer class and the normal humanity of the others no longer appeared plausible. The psychological gap and the feudal relation between superiors and inferiors became absurd and intolerable. Having seen several performances of the original version with unqualified approval, I now found that something grated on my sense of probability. Serfs must speak another language or belong to another race. Otherwise fusion is bound to follow sooner or later. In the French performance the main reason that prevents fusion could find no expression. We may be sure that the doctrine of equality could never have spread so completely in France if there had existed a social language barrier. In England the barrier remains, not, I believe, the cause of the acceptance of inequality, but its illustration, one of the supports of its plausibility, and, also, one of the obstacles to the further percolation of the ideology of psychological ritualism. The English can be divided into a large number of classes, as Mr. H. W. Nevinson has subtly shown in his book *Rough Islanders*. But in practice the division between classes is not clear-cut, there is a continual interchange between them. The only fence that is difficult to climb is that of the letter *h*. To adult men it seems insuperable. Women, who are socially as well as nationally more human and more universal than men, can acquire the better pronunciation even relatively late in life. By the steady flow of her *h*'s and by the "refeened" quality of her vowels, the wife of many a retired

publican has left her husband hopelessly behind. The rule is not absolute, but, on the whole, women are the better social climbers. Men, after a certain age, are baffled and unable to obey the injunctions of their ladified wives and educated children.

Beyond the fence of language lives normal and old-English humanity: the urban and especially the rural proletariat. The agricultural labourer still represents, I suppose, something like one-fifth of the population of England. I have had the privilege of studying his humanity at close quarters. Certainly, my delightful investigations have by no means covered the whole of the country. I must even admit that in one part of Sussex, where I attempted to establish human contacts, I failed most dismally, owing to the utter denseness of the specimens I approached and to my inability to understand their speech or to make my own intelligible to them. Yet I had been able—no small achievement for a foreigner—to converse with the greatest ease with fishermen from every part of Cornwall.

It is, however, especially in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire that I have succeeded in penetrating into the humblest layers of the rural population. Farm-hands who earn 31s. a week have talked with me about their life, their economic problems, their loves, their ambitions, and their views on life, on politics, on religion and on death. I have drunk deep with gardeners, carters, game-keepers and poachers, in beautiful old-world tap-rooms of inns with Chestertonian sign-boards, where I have acquired a love for English ale that has made the most

perfect Bavarian beer for ever insipid to my palate. It was not an easy thing for me to gain tolerance in the gatherings of the villagers. The first resistance to overcome was always that of the inn-keepers who, whenever I appeared, tried to shepherd me into the parlour. But persistence gained me access to the tap-room, where I played at dice and at darts, and displayed a meritorious discrimination in judging ale. Not on one single occasion have I spent more money on any member of the company than he spent on me: for every glass I stood another was offered to me, and the landlord was the only man who benefited from my intrusion. The tribute I had to pay was of a different nature. I was not a little surprised, on one of my first visits to a Buckinghamshire inn, to see a man raise his pint, while I was waiting for mine to come, and offer it to me with the words: "Don't stay dry while you wait. Drink!" One moment's anxious hesitation, while town, upbringing, and hygienic prejudice struggled with my social explorer's instincts, then I put my lips where drooping moustaches had left their mark, and took a deep draught. A well-nigh imperceptible expression of approval passed over the assembled company: a wink here, a nudge there. I had been accepted as a fellow human being, who was to be classified neither with the parson nor with the artist in the big house by the stream. And I soon learned to say to my neighbour: "Take the top off it", when my pint was brought in, or to share a pint pot with my partner in a game.

The tap-room was the test of my humanity and

the entrance into the heart of the people. Approved by the drinking fraternity, I was invited into their cottages, admitted to their table and to friendly intercourse with their womenfolk. I cheered the men of my village at cricket matches, addressed the members of the Women's Institute, sang with the lads along the roads after closing time, and made my speech, after that of the Vicar, at the annual dinner of the cricket club. I have heard my last speech retailed in a company of women by the wife of a small farmer who had been present: a convincing proof, to my mind, that I had struck the right chord. A social observer once told me: "You will know that the villagers have accepted you when, in conversation with you, they use without apology their own regional words and expressions." I believe that I have reached this honourable degree of familiarity.

As I said before, I have come to the conclusion that the people into whose lives I so thoroughly penetrated have not been affected by psychological ritualism. To begin with I have found them intelligent, considerably more so than City men or dwellers in the suburbs, whose conversation is devoted exclusively to motor cars and wireless telephony, and, to a much smaller extent, to golf or tennis. I have heard my friends discuss most entertainingly the relative merits of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Her Privates We*, *Squad*, and other war novels. True, literary merit did not belong to the criteria they applied. They were only interested to know "whether the bloke told the things as they really happened",

and "whether he made you feel you were seeing it all and going through it again". Unwittingly they were trying to find out whether the authors had established the double equation between the subject, the literary expression, and the reader's perception! Furthermore, I have heard positively interesting discussions—though not in the tap-room—between young men to whom I had given cheap editions of the *Outline of History* by H. G. Wells. Inside the inn, usual topics of conversation were the habits of birds, harvesting and farm-work, war experiences and in particular the shortcomings of the officer class, the comparison of experiences in the Boer War and in Colonial expeditions with those of the Great War, the life of some well-known character in the neighbourhood, with remarks that often displayed surprising psychological insight. When old men were numerous, there was much talk of changes of habit, of the cheapness of beer in the good old days, of Maypoles and Queens of the May in grandmother's time, of local traditions and antiquities, of the habits of the new generation, the latter topic being treated with surprising tolerance, understanding and even approval. Conversation is not always on the same level: on Saturday nights sport sometimes provides the only topic, and horse-racing not infrequently occupies the attention of the company for an hour on end. But even this subject is treated more attractively than by men in spats. Many of these villagers have the remarkable memory of people whose retentive power is not spoiled by much reading: the life-history of a horse, the winners

of classical races of many years ago, are recalled with amazing erudition.

I am not asserting that every villager is a scintillating wit, a brilliant conversationalist or a profound thinker. But even among those whose thought moves more slowly than that of the majority of their equals, I have found a shrewd appreciation of the theatrical possibilities of human intercourse. A company is assembled under the glowing oil-lamp of a small tap-room. It has snuggled together and formed a cell which, for all the transient character of its cohesion, has nevertheless a common life of its own. The doors opens, and with a cold blast of wintry atmosphere enters a heavy, dull-eyed ploughboy. He greets the company, settles down into a corner, and waits for his beer. The ceremonies of cup-tasting throw upon him a momentary limelight in which he basks. Just when the company is going to settle down once more to its game of crib and to the conversation which had started before he arrived and when the little world of the tap-room was one to which he had not been born, he draws from his pocket an edition of the evening paper which he has brought from the market-town. "Anybody seen the football results?" Nobody has, of course, and the paper is greedily snatched away. Its contents are discussed, and the newcomer, who has studied it from cover to cover, is able to forestall most remarks, to answer all queries as soon as they arise and to discuss every topic. He has more than fitted into the closed cell, he has become its nucleus. The flame of conversation, which has blazed up on

this feed of paper, dies down again, but the plough-boy has joined the group that does not play cards, and dominates it. Minutes pass, the players utter some rare exclamations, and move the matches that serve as pegs, up and down the cribbage board. The talkers suck away at their cigarettes and imbibe. Then the newcomer again raises his voice. "Ain't old Sam cut up that bad about 'is poor dog?" Astonished looks, even from the crib players, ask for further information, and a detailed story of how old Sam's old dog was run over by a lorry, and of how old Sam is smitten with sorrow, fills the time until the men have to go home for their evening meal.

I found that my villagers live very much this side of the grave. "My end will be pushing up daisies a few feet under the sod" a man of seventy once told me. I don't know whether he had learned the phrase from his son who went to the War. "So I've got to make my paradise in this world. And paradise is contentment." The villagers don't go to church. In the whole neighbourhood, the clergy seem to be High, and the lads, who might be enticed into a very occasional visit to the church if they could bawl out hymns that are familiar to them, take no interest in the semi-Romish proceedings that go on there. But even the women are of little faith, and the few who go to divine service carefully drop all saintliness the moment they leave the church. Sabbatarianism is not prominent; people are quite prepared to work on their allotments on Sundays, and if they do not exert themselves in this way to a larger extent, it is mainly because the English

labourer, whether in town or country, is not fond of hard work.

There is, of course, nothing maudlin in the attitude of country people towards animals. And, indeed, the psychological repression in which animal-worship is rooted is not found here. The agricultural labourer is entirely frank about matters of sex. I have put before some of my friends the puzzling question of what the urban lower middle-class calls the "Saturday night treat" or the "Sunday treat", and I have been answered with roars of laughter. The idea of hebdomadal intercourse has not penetrated the country-side. Sexually, the agricultural labourer stands on the same level as the peasants of Zola, with only this difference, that the greater density of population and the damper climate impose a little more discrimination when the heavens are chosen as a canopy for unlegalised amours.

A vigorous Rabelaisian strain runs through the country-side. Talk easily flows into unrestrained channels, and overflows with little provocation into grossness. I have been in a beer-house where thirty men, between the ages of twenty and sixty-five, entertained each other by telling, each in turn, a Boccacciesque story to the company. As my memory, in these matters, falls short of my good intentions, I was compelled, when my third turn came, to relate the Miller's Tale from Chaucer. The enthusiastic reception of this ancient story proved how little, in this respect, these Englishmen had changed from their ancestors in the course of five centuries. People in the country collect doggerel poems com-

pared to which the works of Restoration dramatists are modest, and keep them in manuscript form for their own delectation and that of their wives. I have come, in particular, across a ballad attributed to Byron, which describes the case of a lady who suffered from the same misfortune as Berthe Maqueron in *La Terre* by Zola. This poem I have also traced in very different surroundings, as I shall mention in dealing with the relics of pre-ritualism among the *h*-pronouncing English.

Men such as these could of course not stand at one or more removes from life. They receive its impact directly, and register it with normal reactions. If they are not eloquent, neither are they unvocal. Their feelings, though not lacking in depth, are easily perceptible because there is little effort to keep them beneath the surface. They experience no difficulty in conveying their sympathy, they are devoted friends as well as good haters. In the management of their existence they show the same love of enjoyment and absence of restraint as other human beings. They are improvident, and spend on drink and tobacco a considerable proportion of their minute wages. They have, however, one puzzling peculiarity which I have noticed among countrymen in very different parts of England. They do not share the xenophobia of town-people, and their national sense of superiority is much less developed. This is of course partly due to the fact that to a certain extent they consider as a foreigner anybody not from their own region, and their sense of national discrimination is therefore less developed. Nevertheless, the

matter remains puzzling. There can be no doubt that old England still flourishes in the country-side. Yet it is without the national arrogance of old England.

Of the urban proletariat I have less to say, except that it certainly is not devoid of the sense of its own national pre-eminence. Undoubtedly its mode of living is less attractive than that of country-people, and the temptation to penetrate into its existence, even if the thing were feasible, much smaller. I suppose that the place where an outsider can see it at its most natural is the police court. There one does not find much psychological ritualism among the public. I have heard conversations between ill-treated wives or girls who were trying to move a police witness to be kind to the ogre who had beaten them, pleading, supplicating, and crying without restraint. Tears and the expression of anger do not seem to be treated as undignified. More constant and direct contact with the class that does not vibrate in harmony with life has tended to dull the sympathetic vibrations of the town proletariat, but I think that, even elsewhere than at the door of the public house, they still display much of the mobility and the directness of their ancestors.

There is no unbridgeable gap between the English and the continental workman, and the differences are not greater than can easily be accounted for by habit, tradition and climate. The English workman is no more systematic, no more active, no more economical than other Englishmen. But he is not

reserved, he speaks to strangers with the greatest ease, laughs freely and has altogether easier manners than the bourgeois. Like the latter, he is not inclined to gesticulate, and accepts social inequalities with a facility that is equal to his impatience of restraint. But, unlike the bourgeois, he is less frightened at the thought of breaking his word or of not keeping an appointment. He hides neither his likes nor his dislikes, and responds to life with as much readiness as the mechanical conditions of the modern town will allow.

It seems clear, then, that ritualistic psychology has not affected the rural and the urban proletariat of England to any marked extent, either because there has not yet been time for the change to permeate to the lower layers of the population, or because it is not suited to them. But those Englishmen whose existence is entirely ruled by the ritualistic conception of life also display traces of their fundamental and old-English humanity. Transplant an Englishman into the right kind of environment, where he can forget the restraints which education has imposed upon him, and he will become as human as a continental, an American, or a Briton from overseas. In India and wherever English people live among populations they consider inferior, they keep up their snobbery, their exclusiveness, and all the outward appearances of ritualism. But there is at least a subtle modification of the canons of sexual behaviour, a latitudinarian tendency which is not less real for being kept in the background.

There are, indeed, certain climates and certain

environments where the English find it more difficult than elsewhere to keep up the pretence to which, after all, the ritualistic conception of life amounts. Italy seems to be one of them. Even in the days of human Old England such differences as the climate was bound to establish between the English and the Southern Latins became obliterated by a somewhat lengthy sojourn in Italy. "*Un Inglese italianato è un diavolo incarnato*" somebody has said, and since the English have receded from their ancestral humanity the saying has not ceased to apply. Capri boasts more than one variety of *Inglese italianato* among its remittance-men, while in Florence Englishmen who have preserved most of the canons of their class nevertheless walk about with *désinvolture* and ample gesticulation, and raise their voices and move their lips with the air of people who have just been relieved of an oppressive burden.

In the chapter called "Repressions" I have attempted to show that the English have, for reasons which I did not examine, acquired the habit of subduing their desires to a degree altogether unknown to continental humanity. I have pointed to peculiarities which resulted from this manner of existing, to an attractive wistfulness, to the nonsense poetry which revealed a certain disturbance of the psychological balance. I do not believe, however, that all the psychological peculiarities which are observable in the English can be brought home to sexual repression. The sexual factor is too often over-emphasised, nowadays, in explanation of human behaviour. One finds in the conduct of the emanci-

pated of modern England ample proof of the fact that a normal sexual life or sexual over-indulgence does not solve all the problems of the soul. If, in a country which likes conformity and shuns oddity, there are nevertheless so many eccentrics, if the repetition of some empty catch-phrase can fire crowds composed of individuals who usually control the expression of every feeling they may be supposed sometimes to experience, if the most unexpected contradictions again and again strike the foreign investigator, the reason must be sought in the strain imposed upon the life of all who are affected by psychological ritualism. The constant habit, not only of hiding one's feelings, but of reacting to life in an artificial way, tells upon those who cultivate it, because it is unnatural. It is natural to respond to life in a direct way, and to do otherwise tires the nervous system in the same way as the townsman's practice of eliminating from his consciousness the thousands of extraneous sounds, perceived by his senses but irrelevant to his immediate activities, creates nervous fatigue.

The habit which exists even among very "proper" people of telling spicy stories is more than an attempt at indirect sexual satisfaction. It is an explosion, a momentary escape from the ritualistic conception of life. Its function is therefore rather different from that of the "smutty" story in the life of the adolescent, for whom it is an endeavour to approach matters that are not otherwise within his reach. It is nevertheless a remarkable fact that, as I have personally observed, the same poems which are collected by countrymen in their private copy-books

are also known to schoolboys and remembered by some adults of the class which practises psychological ritualism. The English who prosecute a chaste novel like *Sleeveless Errand* and who blush at the sight of a French yellow-back possess an unprinted literature that might well be unprintable among less squeamish people. The limerick about the two young ladies of Twickenham is known by more than a third of the adult population, male or female, of this country. We sometimes think that the work of the future social historian writing on our period will consist of nothing except the elimination of superfluous material, that with all the newspapers and the ample memoir literature of our time the only danger for him will be that of overlooking something important owing to the great bulk of evidence. We labour under the delusion that everything intellectual, artistic, moral, and social is being fixed in print. Yet, unless some enlightened anthropologist is at present quietly collecting the unwritten literature of England, the future will miss a significant aspect of our period. Its existence is admitted, allusions to unprintable limericks are manifold, and the only thing not publicly proclaimed, apart from the limericks themselves, is the name of the distinguished, learned, gallant and reverend gentlemen who love them, compose them, and transmit them.

Once again, let us not, through intellectual laziness, call this hypocrisy. Hypocrisy would hide its weakness, while the English merely refuse to set it up in type. Their conception of life would preclude sex, which makes the individual subject to the direct call of life. But their deeper humanity breaks its

fetters and escapes, carried upon the back of a limerick. They compromise by issuing no printed bulletins of their travels upon their secret Pegasus.

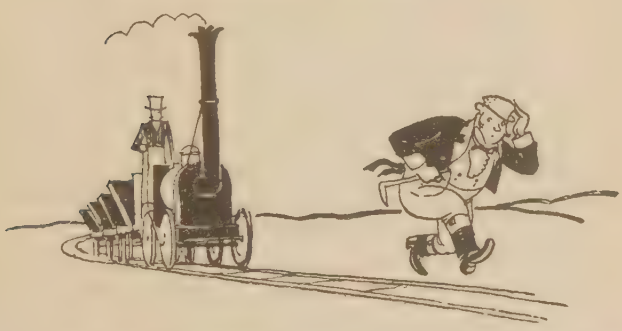
Intelligence, which is so difficult to combine with character that ritualistic discipline has thrown it overboard as cumbrous jetsam, attracts the English in a way which would be impossible if their unintellectualism were congenital. In *The Man Who Lost Himself*, Mr. Osbert Sitwell remarks: "The truth is that when Englishmen are alone after dinner, be the company the most intelligent or the most lewd and imbecile—and always supposing there is enough to drink—there comes a moment of gravity. Women often believe that when they leave the men, the conversation takes a ribald turn. But much more often it is devoted to such matters as, at the lowest level, dreams, coincidences and ghosts: at the highest, the possibility of the survival of the individual after death, and the question of free-will versus predetermination, relativity, and the composition of the atom. Only when thus keyed up does the Englishman dare approach such subjects, though it is evident that they make a deep appeal to him."

It seems, then, that the great difference between Englishmen and foreigners, which makes the foreigner feel that the English are something outside normal humanity, has only existed for the last hundred years, has not yet affected the village, and the urban proletariat to but a small degree, while the people who create this impression of difference upon the foreign visitor betray in their behaviour traces of the deeper humanity that lurks within them.

XII

THE END OF "MERRIE ENGLAND"

How a threefold threat to the preponderance of the landed aristocracy in England was answered in the eighteen-twenties by the keepers of the tradition of England



It is time we made an effort to find out when the coat was cut which seems to fit the English so ill—and by what tailor. In other words, we must try to detect the moment when the ritualistic conception of life was born, and the causes of this historic event. Before we make the attempt, however, we must clear our minds of a possible misconception, which consists in attributing certain superficial resemblances between the United States of America and England to the alleged common origin of their peoples. The American feeling of national superiority has some-

thing akin to that of the English. But surely the American attitude in the matter is not unmixed with a fundamental doubt. Were it otherwise, Americans would not always feel the need to enquire from strangers whether they really do believe in the perfection of America. There would not be that extreme sensitiveness to criticism which is so entirely absent in the English. On the other hand, the feeling of superiority of the English is deep-rooted and an article of their faith. Nor can another common characteristic, the anti-intellectual trend that exists in both countries, be reduced to a common origin. In America it is due to the newness of the country, which has as yet no roots in a cultural past of its own. In England anti-intellectualism results, as we shall see, from a preference for uniformity which leaves the personality undistinguished, and from the emphasis placed upon character.

There is further a common passion for institutional religion which at first sight looks like a relic of the seventeenth century, a period which belongs to the history of both countries. But in America it is a direct continuation of puritanism and of religious zeal. In England it exists in only a small part of the community, and has but a limited influence upon the life of the people. Both countries also suffer from violent inhibitions in the matter of sex. But American purity differs from English purity. Both are militant, though the American variety has a virulence which is rare in England, because the ritualistic conception of life precludes virulence. Both are prurient, because individual psychology does not vary from one side

of the ocean to the other, and the effects of repression are the same in every country. American purity, however, is the real article, it is the purity of Puritans, and England exported her Puritans to the New World long ago. As a factor in the national life, English puritanism died out at the beginning of the eighteenth century. When purity again became the fashion, it found the channel of the old river ready to receive it, even though it was fed from different sources.

Both nations have a strong colour bias. But this again cannot be explained by their common origin. The Dutch in Holland have no race bias. The Hague, which is the South Kensington of Holland, is full of half-castes. Yet the South African Dutch are convinced racialists. Placed in close proximity with the blacks, they know the real danger to women and children which results from the presence of coloured people. The people who fight against the continuation of race barriers in South Africa are the English, who have a shorter tradition of African life. The colour bias of the Dutch and the English therefore varies, though in opposite directions, according to whether they are at home or in South Africa, which proves that colour bias is entirely detached from the question of common origin or common nationality. That both have a colour bias does not prove therefore that the English and the American people look at life in the same way. The Americans have a colour bias because they have a negro population among them. The English, who had relatively little colour bias before the Indian Mutiny, developed

it as a result of the racial hatred that was engendered by the events of those days.

The English burden of psychological ritualism is not shared by Americans, and no more need be said about the attempts to seek in the common past of the English and the Americans the explanation of the character of the English. Neither can it be seriously argued that it was a gift of the misty climate of England unless it be contended that there were no fogs in England before the thirties or thereabouts of last century, and unless up to that time the English climate had been as good as the *Sunday Express* would have us call it now. Did the English develop their sense of fair play, which is alleged to have produced all their noble and distinctive characteristics, as a result of their practice of sport? But the belief that the English are so particularly addicted to sport is a gross exaggeration. I should like to see statistics of the number of people who practise sports on a Saturday afternoon in September, when both cricket and football are in season. On the village green twenty-two men play, and of them only thirteen at a time, for the delectation of the whole population. On the football field twenty-two professionals entertain crowds that sometimes number twenty thousand and more. A rough calculation shows that on such a day less than three per cent. of the English population actually play. There is so little opportunity for London school-children to play that a national organisation is trying to acquire playing-fields for them and covers the hoardings of the Metropolis with pathetic posters. "Grass,

Mummy, grass!" shouts a ragged urchin on one of them, who carries an old football which he usually can only kick about in an arid back alley, when he sees one of the hypothetical fields provided by the association.

It seems to me that the main contact of the bulk of the English nation with sport consists in looking on and in betting. And the most popular sport among the English people who are ruled by the ritualistic conception of life is tennis, a game which develops muscle-control, concentration, quickness of judgement, vanity, snobbery, selfishness and egotism. It is certainly not upon the tennis-courts that the spirit of "fair play" is kept alive. A tennis-club is usually a hotbed of intrigue where no team spirit is ever cultivated and where every player most carefully abstains from giving a game to a weaker player unless he finds a social compensation for his kindness. Let us, once and for all, give up the illusion that the English owe their national peculiarities to their sports. The Germans, who do really practise physical exercise of all kinds and whose collective wanderings keep alive the team spirit, ought by now to be super-Englishmen. If it were argued that the spirit of fair play made English sport what it was, until professionalism and lawn tennis turned it into what it is, one would perhaps be nearer the truth. But then the question would remain: what gave the English their sense of fair play?

Indeed, seek where we may, we have to return to history and look there for the origin of the complexes which gave birth, not to the English gentle-

man, but to the conception which made the English gentleman the ideal of the nation. Now it is a commonly accepted fact that "Merrie England" lasted till approximately the end of the reign of George IV (1820–1830). It is about that time that we must look for the birth of the new conception of life. England, until the Reform Act of 1832, had been an aristocratically governed country. All political power was in the hands of the aristocracy, who governed the country themselves and through the nominees they sent to the House of Commons, and who, moreover, enjoyed a feudal prestige which gave them powers vastly more extensive than those they could have claimed in virtue of the elastic Constitution of the Realm. The aristocracy was not a closed caste. It recruited new members in many ways, but always in a gradual manner that allowed a complete social absorption of the newcomers. A fairly large amount of personal freedom and a sufficient loyalty to the Crown made this system acceptable to the population. Almost completely irreligious, notwithstanding its support of the Established Church as a useful instrument of policy and as a field for the careers of younger sons, this aristocracy showed no great uniformity in its manner of living. Like the upper middle-classes, it was on the whole fond of good living and of good food. For it was only in the course of the nineteenth century that English people became indifferent to what they were eating. From the gourmets they had formerly been they had become gourmands, and deep drinkers they remained until ritualism frowned upon the use of liquor that

weakens the barrier between life and the soul. But whereas most aristocrats cared not for an existence in which human beings are not allowed to vibrate in response to outside stimulation, restraint and even ritualism were not altogether unknown to them.

The most striking case of the complete acceptance of the ritualistic conception of life before the days when it became the ideal of the English nation is that of Lord Castlereagh († 1822), who was an Irishman and a foreigner. This Foreign Secretary who directed the policy of Great Britain at the close of the Napoleonic wars impressed continentals by his impenetrable mask, his unresponsiveness and the extreme courtesy as well as the detachment of his manner. At a time when the upper classes of England were very free in their morals, he astonished and amused the Congress of Vienna by his conjugal fidelity and his domestic virtues. Perhaps Lord Chesterfield († 1773), in his insistence upon form rather than upon essence, upon the manner of acting rather than upon the action itself, may also be cited as another and much earlier case in which marked traces of psychological ritualism are already to be found. Indeed, psychological ritualism may have appeared as a commendable practice to aristocrats who had to sustain the pretence that they differed from ordinary human beings. But except for a few cases it remained for them an ideal rather than a reality.

By the eighteen twenties, however, a series of changes had begun to take place in the social life of England which gravely endangered aristocratic

supremacy. It was, indeed, becoming clear that if mastery was not to pass into altogether different hands, it would in any case have to be shared with a vast number of newcomers, too large to be absorbed by the old rulers. There was a threefold shifting tendency, economic, political and religious, and it is in its endeavour to adapt itself to this new situation, and to make the new masters fit into the old frame, that the common consciousness of England gave definite shape to the ritualistic conception of life.

Some time before the middle of the eighteenth century there started in England a great, though gradual, economic change, which is nowadays called the Industrial Revolution, a term probably invented by Arnold Toynbee in 1884, when he published his *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the Eighteenth Century in England*. The best economic historians of to-day dislike the term, because it suggests that the change was an upheaval. The process lasted at least till 1820, though it is perfectly arguable that it continued till the middle of the nineteenth century. The main characteristic of the event is the substitution of concentrated production on a large scale for home industry. Expanding commercial markets necessitated the improvement of means of communication, and canals and better roads brought coal and iron together. Production in the iron, cotton and woollen industries increased by leaps and bounds, and vast fortunes were piled up while home industries disappeared.

A new class of industrial captains made its appear-

ance. They were frequently men who had left the hand-loom and borrowed a small sum to start a factory; but many of them were land-owners and the heads of old families. Indeed, the landed aristocracy, at the same period, did not lose its economic power: it rather expanded it by the practice of enclosing common-land. But the fact remains that people, often rude and uneducated, were becoming, at the beginning of the century, a real power in the country, by the side of the aristocratic land-owners. These men would probably not have disturbed the social balance, beyond putting the upper classes to the necessity of assimilating more new blood than they liked, though not more than they were able.

The transfer of political power was of much greater significance. The industrial transformation embittered social conflicts by creating a large and terribly exploited proletariat, and, more especially, by intensifying the contrast between those who had and those who wanted. At the same time, ideas of political emancipation were in the air, mainly as a result of the French Revolution. We know that these ideas inspired a movement which eventually brought upon the statute book the Reform Act of 1832. But what must be realised most of all is that the movement was one of long duration, and that it made an immense impression upon the privileged classes. In 1809 and again in 1812 Creevey, an impecunious Member of Parliament and hanger-on of the aristocracy, expressed his fears of the coming catastrophe. He expected the direst results from the progress of democracy. The Tories, who fought political reform

to the bitter end, imagined that it would mean the downfall of the Crown and of the House of Lords. They foresaw social as well as political revolution. The mob in the towns was indeed becoming unruly, and in the winter of 1830–1831 the country-side witnessed menacing scenes of incendiarism and destruction. Even factories were burned. The privileged classes were panic-stricken; fear made them give way before the demand for political reform and agree to the addition of 300,000 voters to the register.

The first House of Commons elected on the new register met in 1833, and the misgivings of the Tories soon proved to be groundless. The change betokened no more than that bank directors, chairmen of companies, and the new rich, as well as representatives of the manufacturing and professional classes and of the more prosperous artisans, would henceforth share the power of the landed aristocracy. Reality was less dreadful than the picture drawn by terror and fancy. But, as usually happens in human affairs, it was the image, the idol, that influenced the course of history rather than that poor shadowy outline called by the names of "reality" and "truth". Lord Wellington voiced the apprehensions that still remained when, in 1833, he wrote to a political friend: "... a new democratic influence has been introduced into elections, the copyholders and free-holders and lease-holders. . . . These are all dissenters from the Church, and are everywhere a formidably active party against the aristocratic influence of the Landed Gentry. . . . The

new influence established in the towns has drawn these to their Party; and it is curious to see to what a degree it is a dissenting interest. . . . Then add intimidation and audacity, which always accompany revolutionary proceedings, occasional breach of promise to vote for the aristocratical candidate and forcing some to stay away to guard their property, and you have the history of many unsuccessful contests in the counties. . . . The mischief of the Reform is that whereas democracy prevailed heretofore only in some places, it now prevails everywhere. There is no place exempt from it. In the great majority it is preponderant."

In conversation with this same friend, the civil servant Croker, the Duke declared that "he did not see what there was to stop, or even check, the revolution". And Croker's reflection was "that a democracy, once set a-going, must sooner or later work itself out till it ends in anarchy, and that some kind of despotism must then come to restore society. How long we may take in going through that process", he mused, "depends on circumstances, but I myself do not see how the encroaching power of the people out-of-doors on the House of Commons, and the encroaching powers of the House of Commons on the House of Lords and the Crown, is to be checked and brought back to its fair balance." It is obvious that, in the early 'thirties, many noble heads lay restless on their pillows, and that, with or without reason, the supporters of the aristocratic régime were more upset by the necessity of sharing their political power with the many than by that

of admitting a smaller number of new-rich into their ranks.

Meanwhile a third urge from below, the new religious movement, had been undermining the monopoly of the ruling classes. If there is any period in the history of England which, considered by itself, would make the spectator doubt the accuracy of the view that the English live this side of the grave, it is that of the Napoleonic wars and of the decades that followed. And yet, to-day, religion is once again a mere external. The religious revival had sprung up in the course of the eighteenth century as a protest against the worldliness of the Established Church; it was a thoroughly democratic movement, found no place inside the Church, and became purely Nonconformist. It was due to the increased prominence which the ideas of the less educated classes were gaining, and the most ignorant section of the community was the only one which responded to the appeal of the Methodist preachers. But in the nineteenth century the revival spread to the Church of England, and gave rise to the Evangelical movement which gained many adherents among the higher classes.

Several causes favoured the upward trend of the democratic religious movement. The new industrialism needed good workmen. A sober factory-worker produced more than did a drinker. The owners therefore became philanthropists and apostles of social improvement. Religion appeared as the best substitute for the happiness which women and children who toiled by day and slept in hovels could

not achieve in this world. Moreover it appeared to all the friends of the old order as the best safeguard against Jacobinism and the spirit of revolution. The new masters would be more manageable if they could learn to bend their heads in prayer. Then, the suffering occasioned by a generation of wars had created—as in 1919—a craving for excitement. This could be satisfied nowhere so cheaply as in the more emotional forms of popular religion. At the same time, Catholicism was raising its head; emancipation was on the way, because the masters of the day were everywhere in the frame of mind of an army that prepares for a retreat, and this roused all the traditional, political, and patriotic hatred against Rome, and contributed to increase the popularity of Protestantism in all its avatars. The end of the 'twenties saw moments of intense popular enthusiasm: the second advent of Christ was expected by many and a revivalist religion threatened to flood the whole area that had for ages been the preserve of an opportunist and worldly clergy closely allied with the aristocracy. There was a double response from above. The unconscious response, a phenomenon not uncommon in England, where social instincts work subterraneously and where the unconscious mind distils its counter-poison without ratiocination or controversy, was a genuine pietism among the educated classes (Wilberforce at an earlier stage and then Newman, Keble, and others). The other response was the conscious—and successful—attempt of the keepers of the aristocratic tradition to annex the religious urge from below at the

same time as they laid hands upon the sons of the new masters, both economic and political. The method employed was that which the Bolsheviks and the Fascists are applying to-day in order to mould the society of the future in accordance with their ideological pattern: education. And it is out of this attempt, which will be described in the following chapter, to make the new masters adjust themselves to the spirit of the old régime, that was born the ritualistic conception of life and the acceptance by the English of the "gentleman" as their national ideal.

Even if left to itself, the democratic religious revival would have made its imprint upon the nineteenth century. It imposed two entirely new ideals upon social life: chastity and sabbatarianism. Social justice, the love of one's neighbour, humility, peacefulness, the forgiving of trespasses, and all the other teachings of the Sermon on the Mount have never been the virtues of the nations that call themselves Christian. Least of all could they have appealed to a nation so deeply rooted in the world of the present as the English. But between chastity and its opposite lies the gulf that separates action from abstention. All the other virtues differ from their opposites only by a series of imperceptible gradations, and are themselves only one point in the centre of a scale of values. But there was less difficulty in condemning the sin of unchastity, which moreover has always been the greatest offence in the eyes of those who follow the teachings of Christ as interpreted by St. Paul. It is not in England alone that "immor-

ality" means, not the absence of an ethical sense, but unchastity, that the "virtue" of a woman means her chastity, that a "good girl" is a chaste girl. The ancient Hebrews disliked Onan as an uneconomic being, and the Christians have inherited their morality. An attempt to impose upon human beings the practice of one of the most exacting moral codes —that of Christianity—is bound to reduce itself to an attempt to curb the flesh.

Only in one other direction did the religious revival affect the life of the nation. In rendering to God what is God's, and to the World what is the World's, the faithful have been able to apportion time in a manner which is not too disadvantageous to them. It is easier to observe the Sabbath than to love one's neighbour. And so it happened that, after the gaiety of the Georgian Sunday and its noisy life in the parks of amusement, there came the drab Sabbath of the Victorians. At the same time Puritanism enrolled Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, and Trollope, and made them write books fit for English Christians to read. But the same two virtues, chastity and sabbatarianism, were also and at the same time advocated by the Puritans of Holland and of America, two countries which have never worshipped English gentlemanliness.

It would be a mistake to attribute the change that came over England in the 'thirties and the 'forties to the influence of Queen Victoria and her Court. In most respects, the great Queen may have been an ordinary Englishwoman. But for all her personal virtue she lacked the merit of being a sabbatarian.

And, what is much more significant, she never adopted the ritualistic conception of life! She remained, in this one respect, and throughout her long existence, a gushing little German lady. She always reacted, and with the utmost spontaneity, with the greatest vivacity, to every stimulus from outside: she neither fought her likes and her dislikes, nor dissembled them. She poured herself out to the first available confidant and always remained a normal human being. The great change, therefore, did not originate with her. Nor with the more reserved and psychologically repressed Albert the Good. He had a wonderfully active mind, but little influence. Human individuals do not bend the course of historical events. They are, at the most, the executive arm of powers greater than themselves. Even without Victoria and Albert the English gentleman would have stepped upon the stage. He was ushered in, as we shall see, by men who never wore Court dress.

XIII

THE BIRTH OF AN IDEAL

How Dr. Arnold of Rugby failed to reform the educational system of England and created the ritualistic conception of life

A crucial point has now been reached in this investigation. We have seen how the mastership of the landed aristocracy was threatened by the threefold urge from below, that of the new captains of industry, of the democratic movement, and of the popular religious revival. During the third decade of the nineteenth century the danger, increased by fears and by fancies, was viewed so seriously that it seemed to necessitate a re-orientation of the whole life of the nation. Consciously and unconsciously, all those who, not only owing to financial motives, but also through the love of power which is common

to all men, were interested in the preservation of the old forms, and those who, though not interested themselves, were attached to the old system because of what can only be described as reasons of an aesthetic nature, set themselves to the task of canalising the urge from below. The permanent characteristics of the English, their national arrogance, their military valour, their readiness for necessary revolutionary changes and their attachment to old forms and hallowed names: in short, their strong sense of the existence of a collective entity above and outside the individual, their state-sense, one might almost say, have a way, at critical junctures, of taking an imperious hold upon the nation and of guiding it towards solutions that assure the continuity of national life without impairing its adaptability to novel circumstances. This may, after all, be a manifestation of the tribal god, unless it be no more than the result of an insular position which has given the English a longer stretch of national and separate existence.

To every mind that busied itself with the problems of the day in relation to the chances of the future there appeared to be, as I have already pointed out, but one solution: that of educating the sons of the new masters side by side with those of the old, so as to weld them together into one common tradition of mastership, while at the same time the new religious movement was to be annexed and utilised in the course of this educational process. One instrument lay ready to hand: the public school.

The public schools of England had been founded in previous centuries mainly, though not exclusively, in order to provide poor children with free education. They had almost entirely ceased to serve this purpose, and had become the preserve of the rich, although by no means all the rich sent their children there. But certain public schools enjoyed a great social reputation, and were supposed, not unjustly, to open the door to a political career. "An Eton reputation was a long step towards a seat in the House", says Professor G. M. Trevelyan (in *Lord Grey and the Reform Bill*). It was often supposed that the connections formed by a young boy while at a public school were bound to last throughout his life, while contact with the sons of the best families in England must exercise upon him the most salutary influence. A striking example of this frame of mind can be found in an unpublished letter written in June 1827, which Mr. Robert C. Trevelyan has kindly communicated to me. It was written by Mark Philips, who later became a Member of Parliament, to his father, a landed proprietor who was also a prosperous millowner. The Philipses were therefore of the type of new masters that most closely resembled the old, and the views of their eldest son about the utility of a public school education are of the greatest interest. The whole letter is a social document of the period, so fascinating and so entertaining that it deserves to be published in full, including those passages which are not relevant to the present issue. If the letter sounds like a parody of contemporary disputes, if, indeed, it may

appear to some readers too good to be true, I must beg them to accept my assurance of its absolute authenticity.

"I suppose", wrote Mark Philips, "Robert[1] will have arrived at home before you receive this. As I think there is no chance of Dr. Carpenter's being able to resume his duties, I decidedly recommend that Robert should not return to petticoat government. I am a great friend to discipline, but God forbid that my only brother should remain at a school under the discipline of women in the absence of a master. He will soon learn to set Mrs. C. and her amiable daughters at defiance, and in fact I should be sorry not to see him do so, as I should set him down as a boy of no spirit unless he did so. To be under the direction of an usher also is a great misfortune and wherever there is a division of the supreme authority, such as exists at present at Dr. Carpenter's, the school must inevitably become fit merely for children. Robert, as my mother fears, may not be very bright, but will his remaining without a master render him more so? The lad is not a fool and if his mettle was put to the proof amongst a greater number of classfellows, I do not despair of his passing respectably amongst them; he will have the property of a gentleman and I hope he will have the manners and pursuits of one, but I should consider it a great misfortune for him to remain long amongst his present companions; he has already acquired a very

[1] Younger brother of Mark Philips. Mark was 28 years old, Robert about 14.

. . .[1] pronunciation and the sooner he is removed to a school where his pronunciation will be laughed at, he will begin to correct them; but where the older boys, such as was the case with Dawson, happen to be vulgar, all the younger boys ape them to a certain extent because they think the older boys fit objects of imitation. If this is the case where the elder boys are vulgar, will it not be the same where they are the contrary, and is it not better to imitate a good than a bad model? Would you ever wish Robert to be intimate with the Dawsons? Would you wish him to be intimate with P***? Or with the Cromptons of Birmingham? I should not, and I am therefore an advocate for his going to a public school where he will have a greater choice of companions and his advantage hereafter. Look at my own case, with how many of my school or college companions am I on terms of intimacy? or with how many of them do I wish to be so? how many of them would be fit companions for my sisters or my family? I now know about three of my former companions, but I cannot deceive myself so far as to think that it would not have conduced frequently to my pleasure and my advantage had I been at a public school and afterwards at Cambridge. It is a serious consideration for a parent, I know, what disposition he makes of his sons as regards their education, but the child may suffer for life from an error of judgement on the part of a parent. My Mother has fears for Robert's health, but against this I will ask whether a pent-house like the garden

[1] One word illegible.

at Dr. Carpenter's is a more healthy place than the play-ground at Eton where the first Cricket Players in England are formed. A play-ground is of quite as much consequence in my opinion as a master. The latter may make a good scholar, the former a robust man, and without strength of body the chances are, there will be no great activity of mind. I look to Robert's welfare with all the anxiety of a parent; it is more than probable that I may have some day to fill the place of one towards him: I have been lately gaining experience dearly and perhaps for his advantage as well as my own in the end. On the score of morals there is very little difference between public and private schools and will anybody pretend to say that in after life they can distinguish between the habits of a man who was educated in a private school or a public one, as far as the morality of these habits are concerned? A child may be stuffed with a great deal of Catechism and Gospel at a private school, but is it not more than probable that when he becomes his own master he will have a distaste for what was formerly forced upon him as a task, before he understood its meaning or its value? I do not wish, my dear father, to force my opinions upon you: I have no right to do so, but I think you will admit with me that something should be done for Robert, and that without loss of time.

"Believe me, as ever, your affectionate son,

"MARK PHILIPS

"I am sorry to hear that N.P.'s knee does not

improve more rapidly. Remember me to him; he is a man of power and principle and I do not meet with such every day. Are you quite sure that the Xtian name of the man who broke the dog's leg is not John?"

At the time when Mark Philips gave the public schools this glowing testimonial, they were, notwithstanding their reputation for social utility, far from enjoying the universal confidence of the parents who could have afforded to send their children there. Indeed, the system suffered from the gravest defects. An incredible degree of roughness prevailed among the boys. There were continual fights, and young Gladstone, who was at Eton from 1821 to 1827, more than once described them in his letters with much approval and enthusiasm. "Once at least in these times a boy was killed", says Gladstone's biographer, Morley, whose chapter on Eton is well worth reading. The amazing Dr. Keate, who was head master, flogged the boys most cruelly. On a single summer's day he once maltreated eighty boys, and he appears to have chosen his victims quite indiscriminately and often so unjustly that one must suppose he had to reign by terror over a flock of ruffians.

Here, by the way, may be mentioned one of those instances where the outsider's judgement completely falters. At a dinner given at Eton in 1841, when Keate was no longer head master, the following scene took place, which had better be related in Gladstone's own words: "I suppose it to be beyond

doubt that of the assembled company the vastly preponderating majority had been under his sway at Eton; and if, when in that condition, any one of them had been asked how he liked Dr. Keate, he would beyond question have answered 'Keate? Oh, I hate him!' It is equally beyond doubt that to the persons of the whole of them, with the rarest exceptions, it had been the case of Dr. Keate to administer the salutary correction of the birch. But upon this occasion, when his name had been announced the scene was indescribable. . . . The roar of cheering had a beginning, but never knew satiety or end. Like the huge waves at Biarritz, the floods of cheering continually recommenced; the whole process was such that we seemed to have lost our self-possession and to be hardly able to keep our seats. When at length it became possible Keate rose: that is to say, his head was slightly projected over the heads of his two neighbours. He struggled to speak; I will not say I heard every syllable, for there were no syllables; speak he could not. He tried in vain to mumble a word or two, but wholly failed, recommenced the vain struggle and sat down. It was certainly one of the most moving spectacles that in my whole life I have witnessed." The inward meaning of this episode is not clear to me. Certainly, the English are not good haters, for they are not long haters. Also there is nothing grown-up men forget more easily than the emotions of their youth, and this applies to the average human being as well as to the Englishman. When they cheered the loathsome Keate, these old Etonians must have greeted

their past years, the school where, though not happy, they had been young, and cherished the hopes which life would dash as it dashes all youthful expectations. But perhaps there was more. In 1841 already the public school, as an institution and as a symbol, had acquired a halo it did not possess before the days of its reform.

Education at the unreformed public schools was on a very low level. "What is taught at a public school?" asked Lord Lytton in 1832. And his answer was "The classics only, and the classics badly". Gladstone, who was not unhappy at Eton, admits that science fared ill, and that no notice was taken of the existence of the mathematics master. Christianity was not, in those days, a thing seriously considered in the school curriculum. We have already seen Mark Philips's opinion on this subject. Religious instruction, according to another writer, was "reduced to zero". "The actual teaching of Christianity was all but dead", wrote Gladstone in later years, and Lord Lytton considered that religion was more taught in the schools for the "middle orders" than in those for the higher.

Sport was practised, but only as a recreation. It was not an important pursuit in the life of the boys, who preferred more unruly pastimes, such as gambling and card-playing or those described by Gladstone, when every whole or half holiday groups of boys went to Salt Hill to bully the waiter and drink egg-wine. Not all the liquid consumed in the unregenerated public school was of this relatively innocuous nature.

The moral tone of these schools was far from distinguished and considerable licentiousness seems to have existed. In one of his sermons Dr. Arnold, the head master of Rugby, quoted with approval the words of Mr. John Bowdler: "Public schools are the very seats and nurseries of vice. It may be unavoidable or it may not, but the fact is indisputable. None can pass through a large school without being pretty intimately acquainted with vice, and few, alas! very few without tasting too largely of that poisoned bowl. The hour of grace and repentance at length arrives, and they are astonished at their former fatuity. The young convert looks back with inexpressible regret to those hours which have been wasted in folly, or worse than folly, and the more lively his sense of the newly discovered mercies, the more piercing his anguish for past indulgences."

Arnold made no attempt in his sermon to mitigate this judgement. He appealed to his audience, the boys in the school-chapel, to agree with him. He repeated the statement again and again: "Public schools *are* the very seats and nurseries of vice." He then proceeded to explain the meaning of these awe-inspiring words: "That is properly a nursery of vice, where a boy unlearns the pure and honest principles which he may have received at home, and gets in their stead others which are utterly low and base and mischievous—where he loses his modesty, his respect for truth, and his affectionateness, and becomes coarse and false, and unfeeling. That, too, is a nursery of vice and most fearfully so, where vice is bold, and forward and presuming;

and goodness is timid and shy, and existing as if by sufferance—where the good, instead of setting the tone of society, and branding with disgrace those who disregard it, are themselves exposed to reproach for their goodness, and shrink before the open avowal of evil principles, which the bad are striving to make the law of the community. . . ."

Arnold's severe verdict might perhaps be discounted owing to his general pessimism regarding the nature of boys. But, corroborated as it is by many other authorities, it may be usefully quoted, because of the important part he played in the counter-attack by the keepers of old privileges. It is not surprising that the public school was distrusted, and that many aristocrats preferred private tutors for their children, while many of the upper middle-class patronised private schools. Nor is it strange that, when the public school began to appear as the appointed instrument for countering the threefold advance from below, those who wished to use it felt that they must begin by improving it. In the first place it was clearly realised how hopelessly inadequate the school programme had become. In his book *England and the English*, published in 1832, Lord Lytton expressed this view in the following terms: "Either public schools will embrace improved modes and additional branches of learning, or it will cease to be the fashion to support them. The more aristocratic families who have no interest in their foundations will desert them, and they will gradually be left as monastic reservoirs to college institutions. Let us hope to avert this misfortune while we may, and,

by exciting among the teachers of education a wholesome and legitimate spirit of alarm, arouse in them the consequent spirit of reform. Let us interest the higher classes in the preservation of their own power: let them, while encouraging schools for the children of the poor, improve, by their natural influence, the schools adapted for their own; the same influences that now support a superficial education, would as easily expedite the progress of a sound one, and it would become the fashion to be educated well, as it is now the fashion to be educated ill. Will they refuse or dally with this necessity?"

In those days, indeed, the idea of public-school reform was in the air. Reforms were being contemplated at Harrow and at Winchester. In August 1827, the head mastership of Rugby became vacant. There were a number of applicants for the post, and, very late in the day, Thomas Arnold, then a private teacher, joined the ranks of the candidates. He had no time for canvassing, and was unknown to most of the twelve trustees of Rugby school. But among his testimonials was a letter from Dr. Hawkins, who later became Provost of Oriel, and who predicted that, if elected head master of Rugby, Arnold would "change the face of education all through the public schools of England". This statement, Arnold was told, weighed most strongly in his favour. The trustees, all "noblemen and gentlemen of Warwickshire", appointed the late-comer. What determined the choice of these keepers of the aristocratic system was their conviction that they

had found the man who would adapt the old instrument to the new use for which it was needed.

Arnold was the son of a government official and had himself been to Winchester, one of the oldest public schools. He was aware that England was too much of an oligarchy, but nevertheless he held that "there is much good in the oligarchical spirit as it exists in England". He liked the aristocratic system and believed in it. "When an aristocracy is not thoroughly corrupted, its strength is incalculable, and it acts through the relations of private life, which are permanent, whereas the political excitement which opposes it must always be short-lived. In fact, the great amount of liberty and good government enjoyed in England is the security of the aristocracy; there are no such pressing and flagrant evils existing, as to force men's attention from their own domestic concerns, and make them cast off their natural ties of respect or fear for their richer or nobler neighbours." He also speaks in one of his letters of "that sort of religious aristocratical chivalry so common to young men, to students and to members of the aristocracy". He shared the fears of those who looked unfavourably upon the social and political changes that were taking place. In 1820 already he had written: "The folly or the mischievous obstinacy with which they (the Opposition) persist in palliating the excesses of the Jacobins is really scandalous." It is clear then that Arnold was the man to lend himself wholeheartedly to the endeavour to preserve as much as possible of the aristocratic spirit in England.

It is well worth noting that, politically and religiously, Arnold was all in favour of canalising the dangerous urge from below between safe banks. Before his appointment he had written to a friend describing his attitude to social and political reform: "My views of things certainly become daily more *reforming*; and what I above all things wish to see is, a close union between Christian reformers and those who are often, as I think, falsely charged with being enemies of Christianity. It is a part of the perfection of the Gospel that it is attractive to all those who love truth and goodness as soon as it is known in its true nature, whilst it tends to clear away those erroneous ways and evil passions with which philanthropy and philosophy, so long as they stand aloof from it, are ever in some degree corrupted. My feeling towards men whom I believe to be sincere lovers of truth and the happiness of their fellow-creatures, while they seek these ends otherwise than through the medium of the Gospel, is rather that they are not far from the Kingdom of God, and might be brought into it altogether, than that they are enemies whose views are directly opposed to our own." Though never so clearly formulated, one can see in his correspondence traces of his opinion that religious movements from below "in a time of much excitement, when popular opinions in their most vulgar forms were very noisy, and seemed to some very alarming", should give rise to a reaction which would be moulded into a beneficial shape by the spirit of aristocracy.

Arnold was, indeed, a strong believer, not only

in the Church of England as an institution, but in the Protestant religion itself. He was no bigoted anti-papist, and he has written about the beauties of the Catholic ritual lines that can almost compare with those of Sir Thomas Browne quoted in a previous chapter. His ideal of education therefore naturally was "to form Christian men", as well as to make English gentlemen. "A thorough English gentleman, Christian, manly and enlightened . . . is a finer specimen of human nature than any other country, I believe, can furnish." "Christian, manly and enlightened": this is indeed what he wanted to make the boys who were entrusted to his care.

Christian he tried to make them by dint of prayers, sermons, religious exercises and by allowing Christianity to permeate their whole education: he set them essays on religious subjects, introduced religion into the teaching of history and into almost every moment of their day. Soon nobody could have said that Christianity was dead at Rugby. Manly the boys were to become by the practice of virtue in the restricted sense of the word, and by sport. For Arnold, although no sport maniac, was not unfriendly to physical exercise, and, especially during the later years of his head mastership, often used, with evident approval, to watch the boys play football. But he wanted to preserve the balance between the training of the body and the training of the mind. As his biographer, Dean Stanley, tells us "he held that the freedom of the sports of public schools was particularly favourable" to this balance. "Whenever he saw that boys were reading too much, he

always remonstrated with them, relaxed their work, and if they were in the upper part of the school, would invite them to his house in the half-year or the holidays to refresh them."

Yet, on the other hand, his approach to "enlightenment", the third point of his programme, is not devoid of a certain ambiguity. Personally, he had an alert and robust mind, a great intellectual curiosity which was never satisfied and launched him into one new study after another. He also had great ideas of improving the course of studies at Rugby by introducing into the curriculum history and modern languages. Nevertheless, one cannot escape a feeling that "enlightenment" weighed less with him than the two other aims. To a man who applied for the post of master at Rugby he replied that he wanted a "Christian and a gentleman". "I do not so much care about scholarship", he added, and although he immediately proceeded to qualify this statement, the impression left by the letter is that in his first unguarded utterance he had allowed his deeper thought to escape.

Leaving aside, for one moment, the question of the manner and especially the spirit in which Arnold tried to achieve his reform and to turn his boys into Christian, manly and enlightened people, we must ask ourselves what, in the fourteen years of his mastership, he really performed. Charles Henry Pearson, who became Education Minister in Victoria, has left in his *Memorials*, edited by W. Stebbing, an interesting picture of Rugby school as he found it in 1843, a year after the death of Dr.

Arnold. From the point of view of intellectual enlightenment, Arnold does not appear to have achieved a great deal. "In reality we learned nothing but Latin and Greek", writes Pearson, "and those very imperfectly. . . . I cannot remember any attempt to teach history. On the whole, I fear it cannot be said that useful knowledge was in great repute in the Rugby of 1843." But it is from the point of view of Christianity and manliness that Pearson's testimony is especially interesting. "It is undoubted", he wrote, "that Arnold's pupils lived in an atmosphere of priggishness. They were taught to be always feeling their moral muscles, always careful about their schoolfellows' morality, and always mindful of the high mission which they took with them into the world as Rugby boys. The precepts were more weighty than boys could assimilate without incessant pretentiousness, and before long Rugby was known at Oxford as 'the disagreeable school'. Its reputation in the Army was, I believe, even worse. Now it may well be that Oxford undergraduates and regimental messes are not infallible judges of a desirable tone. Parents no doubt saw another side to the controversy—that the Rugby men were honourably careful not to run into debt, to gamble, or to indulge in the different forms of social immorality that were not severely reprimanded in young men at college forty years ago. The simple fact, however, is that Rugby men were not better than the best set from any good public school—Eton, Harrow, or Winchester. The difference was that the Rugbeians were self-consciously moral, and this

difference was to their disadvantage as men of the world. Again, in the rare instances where a Rugby man renounced the idea of his apostolate, and lapsed into fast courses, he incurred something of the odium that attaches to the backsliding 'professor' of a religious community. The fault lay in education that had been pretentious and overstrained."

On the whole, Arnold failed in his purpose of turning the public school into a nursery of Christianity, manliness and enlightenment. Had he been able to see Rugby in the later 'forties he would certainly have agreed with Pearson and probably also with Talleyrand, who is said once to have described the English public school system as "the best in the world, and very bad". Besides, Arnold himself said, when approaching the end of his short career: "I came to Rugby full of plans for school reform, but I soon found that the reform of a public school was a much more difficult thing than I had imagined."

It was necessary to interrupt historical sequence and to run ahead of events, before we had finished dealing with the influence and the work of Dr. Arnold. For it becomes easier, in the light of his failure, to distinguish, precisely, what he brought about. He certainly did not revolutionise the school curriculum—we shall see in the next chapter how completely he failed in his task of bringing "enlightenment" to the public-school boys. Nor did he succeed in the hopeless task of turning his boys into models of Christian manhood. But what he did was

no mean thing: his attempt to make the boys into what, in his own mind, they could not be before they had ceased to be boys, had, as I shall presently explain, the entirely unexpected result of calling into existence the ritualistic conception of life.

I do not suggest that Dr. Arnold himself was in any way affected by psychological ritualism. He was a normal human being, rather more intelligent, more learned, and more religious than the average. He had that respect for intelligence and intellectualism which, in later years, was to become so un-English. He was both open to intellectual persuasion, and willing to think for himself, as he showed by accepting Niebuhr's highly revolutionary views on Roman history. He had, moreover, a vehemence of character and a confidence in himself, when battling for one of the causes he had at heart, which equally mark him as a normal Englishman of the *old* school.[1]

It was fresh from Strachey's Arnold that I approached the Arnold of Stanley's *Life* and of the *Sermons*. No doubt, like Arnold, I have no sense of Humour and am therefore unable, like Mr. Strachey, the Englishman, to laugh when an ordinary human being could only feel a deep emotion.

[1] He did not despise all foreigners, and except in the last year of his life, he liked the French. His views on table-manners were not what an Englishman would now consider orthodox (see Stanley's *Life* for the year 1830). "I hold the lines *Nil Admirari* to be as utterly false as any moral sentiment ever uttered", he once wrote, and he more than once gave expression to this plea in favour of a direct contact with the outside world.

It is indeed not particularly difficult to laugh at Dr. Arnold's monotonous manner of expression and at his *idées fixes*. But what of the inspiration, of the conviction, of the glowing love and the faith that lay beneath them? What, again, of the confidence, of the esteem and of the affection he roused in his pupils? Arnold's death called forth even from his most convinced adversaries nothing but declarations of deep regret and profound regard. To the Rugby boys, his sudden death appeared as a calamity. And this is not surprising, if one realises that for many of them he had become the pivot of their existence. In a world where bullying and lying had become a tradition, he had won the boys' hearts by making it a principle to believe every word they uttered. "If you say so, that is quite enough—*of course* I believe your word", he would say even to boys of lower forms. How different from Keate, who increased the undeserved punishment of a boy for giving his word that he was not guilty! Consequently it became the general feeling that "it was a shame to tell Arnold a lie—he always believes one". If, notwithstanding all the traits which surprise Mr. Strachey, Arnold could inspire young boys with this sense of shame at the idea of deceiving him, he must have had a sterling quality of leadership that marks him as a great man.

Here, however, comes the question of the use made by Arnold of his gifts of leadership. His great handicap was that the boys whom he wanted to make Christian, manly and enlightened were, in his view, none of these things, and could never be made

so as long as they remained boys. He considered of course that, morally, even adults were not worthy of much respect: a union of vice and intellectual power seemed to him "rather a sign of the age", and of his fellow-countrymen he wrote: "My great fear is that the English are indifferent to justice when it is not on their own side." These defects, nevertheless, were especially marked in schoolboys. "I am daily more struck", he wrote to a friend, "with the very low average of intellectual power, and of the difficulties of meeting those various temptations, both intellectual and moral, which stand in boys' way; a school shows as undisguisedly as any place the corruption of human nature, and the monstrous advantage with which evil starts, if I may so speak, in its contest with good." Or, as he put it to another friend: "Here, in the nakedness of boy-nature, one is quite able to understand how there would not be found so many as even ten righteous in the whole city." He commented generally upon the "little intellectual power" and a "prevalent mediocrity of character" among the boys.

Yet, as we have seen, he cherished the most ambitious plans as to the ultimate destination of this unpromising material. Were not these boys destined to become the new masters, the epitome of all the new tendencies, annexed and made subservient to the old aristocratic order of things? "You should feel", he said in addressing the boys of the Sixth Form, "like officers in the Army or Navy." Officers! This comparison has been applied, ever since, to the public-school men of England. In his

revealing little book on *The English Public School* (1929) Mr. Bernard Darwin writes: "I asked one whose opinion I valued, what he deemed the essential quality produced by the public schools. He answered that it was a readiness to be an officer."

Officers are men who have to fashion their bodies and their minds according to a pre-conceived pattern, and who have always to appear that which they are not. They may be as intelligent and as sensitive as Siegfried Sassoon, but by a show of mechanically executive gifts and of indifference to danger, they have to command men who are like themselves. They owe their authority to a convention that is artificially imposed upon the rank and file. It was the avowed aim of Arnold and of the public-school masters after him to produce men such as these. Now it will not do to deride this ideal. The military officer is one of the highest forms of man-turned-into-function. He is, as the Samurai has been in Japan, the man placed before a superhuman task which he is unable to fulfil by means of his weak, responsive, impulsive and faltering humanity. He can only succeed by developing a belief in his power to command, which is, of course, the same thing as the power to command. He must practise virtues which are not his by nature. In the same way, to make officers of his boys, Arnold had to make them practise virtues which were not theirs by nature. "Can the change from childhood to manhood be hastened, without prematurely exhausting the faculties of body and mind?" he wondered, perfectly aware that he was attempting

something that was almost unnatural. But the task had to be fulfilled. The boys were not yet Christians, and Christians they must become. The first thing to be done was to build up a vast system of make-believe.

If the boys could not be Christian, manly and enlightened, they must at least be made to respect the ideals of Christianity, manliness and enlightenment, with such fervour that, when adolescence had passed, they would almost automatically conform to their ideal. Therefore he adopted the method "of treating the boys as gentlemen and reasonable beings, of making them respect themselves by the mere respect he showed them, of showing that he appealed and trusted to their own common sense and conscience", as his biographer puts it. There is of course a direct connection between a psychological state and its manifestation. If the state cannot be created directly, the next best thing may be to create its symptoms. Establish the paraphernalia of self-righteousness, and self-righteousness will most likely follow with a tendency to live up to one's own self-esteem. It is a fruitful method of suggestion.

Material helps to suggestion were not lacking. What could assist future officers more than to foster among them an *esprit de corps*? Human beings will do for an abstract notion what they will not do for other human beings. The abstract notion remains part of themselves, and loyalty to it is not outside their reach. The School was to be this rallying point, this inspiration for the unenlightened young pagans. In one of his sermons Dr. Arnold said:

"There is, or there ought to be, something very ennobling in being connected with an establishment at once ancient and magnificent, where all about us, and all the associations belonging to the objects around us, should be great, splendid and elevating. What an individual ought and often does derive from the feeling that he is born of an old and illustrious race, from being familiar from his childhood with the walls and trees which speak of the past no less than of the present, and make both full of images of greatness; this, in an inferior degree, belongs to every member of an ancient and celebrated place of education. In this respect every one of us has a responsibility imposed upon him, which I wish that we more considered." Worship of an idea, the School, was to take the boys outside their unvirtuous selves, and make them behave as they would not have behaved for merely ethical reasons. So, for the honour of the School, the boys had to live *as though* they were worthy of being its members, until the time came when, being boys no longer, they could really honour it by being worthy of it.

As a final preparation to their career of "lay-officers" the boys who reached the Sixth Form were given a share of authority. This was only a modification of the existing institution of fagging and of the power of the bigger boy. That amazing and, to the foreign observer, most degrading aspect of corporal punishment, its infliction by fellow-schoolboys as a recognised feature of school discipline, was the invention of Dr. Arnold. He reduced the amount of flogging, but he preserved and defended the institution, as indeed a man who had his idea

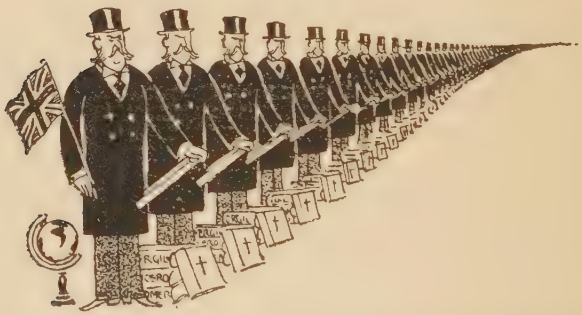
of boy-nature was bound to do. He considered that to be flogged by older boys would, in the words of his pupil and biographer, be "the chief means of creating a respect for moral and intellectual excellence". One may differ as to the value of respect created by the rod. But the effect which the wielding of power had upon the boys of the Sixth Form is undeniable. What better way could there be for them to learn to govern, to be masters, which was, after all, the aim of the reform?

It is in the psychological results of his methods and of his conduct, therefore, that the influence of Dr. Arnold must be sought rather than in any reform of the educational system. Had he been successful, and had he, in particular, been able to bring about the enlightenment at which he aimed, the results of his work would have been long since forgotten. For enlightenment is the last gift required by an officer. If he turned the sons of the masters of England into "officers", he did it by giving them a clan-sense, an unreasoned and enthusiastic attachment to an institution, and a training in the wielding of power over human beings. And he sowed in them the seeds of the ritualistic conception of life, by making them admire moral qualities that were not theirs, display the externals of sentiments they could, by definition, not harbour, and repress the inclinations of their own nature. Instead of considering them as plastic material, out of which he could fashion tolerable men with a natural response to the impression made upon them by the outside world, Arnold established a barrier between human nature and the boys of Rugby.

XIV

THE IDEAL ADOPTED

How snobbery and "the spirit of vying" soon made the new ideal acceptable to the portion of the population with which the foreigner usually comes into contact



It would be a mistake to imagine that the Englishman of to-day and of yesterday is the product of the public-school system. The public-school system as we know it at present is as different from that initiated by Arnold as Arnold's Rugby was from the bear-gardens that existed before his day. The real public-school reform began about 1860, and, like all deep and real reforms, happened neither suddenly nor in a spectacular way. At that date, the new Englishman was already flourishing, and he continued to flourish altogether independently of the

further development of the educational establishments for the sons of the well-to-do.

We can find a happy illustration of these developments in the life of Edward Bowen, assistant master at Harrow from 1859 to 1901, one of the most striking and fascinating schoolmasters England has ever produced. He was most unorthodox in his methods, and most successful withal. He did much, if not everything, to introduce into his school new methods of teaching as well as broader principles of education. To sport in the life of the school he attached an importance which would have disturbed Dr. Arnold's delicate sense of the balance between the training of the body and that of the mind, and when, in a poem about the cricket match between Eton and Harrow, in 1878, he apostrophised the players with the lines:

> What did you come to Harrow for
> If we lose the match to-night?

he was, as his biographer says, scarcely going beyond his own real mind on the matter. In many other respects Bowen was diametrically opposed to the views of Arnold and of those who followed in Arnold's footsteps. The forty-three years of his scholastic career were one long protest against Arnoldism. In April 1897, Bowen contributed a paper to the *Journal of Education* in which he attacked "Arnoldides Chiffers", a well-known disciple of Dr. Arnold, while he re-stated his own opinions. "Humour, paradox, fancy, nonsense", he thought, should "gild the solidity of the lesson." Rewards he

considered "almost as demoralising as punishments". He was not averse to the boys "lounging" during lessons, provided they did not "loll". "I am going on the theory that boys are willing to learn", he wrote, and he rejected the view that the master must necessarily be morally better than the boy, or that "specially directed efforts can do much to change a boy's nature". Very little indeed was left of Arnold's theory that the task of the public-school master was to make Christian, manly and enlightened people out of boys who by nature had none of these three virtues.

At the same time, however, and in the same paper, Edward Bowen revealed to what a degree he had himself become affected by the ritualistic conception of life born of Dr. Arnold's attempt to create "officers" by repressing nature and by holding before people an ideal which they could not reach. "If you want to swim against the stream, you must first learn to swim with it. . . . Opportunism is the back view of the edifice of which statesmanship is the façade. The Exchequer and the Admiralty are at war, but the Government must pass the budget. A permanent secretary finds his political chief hopeless and incapable, but he neither says so nor appears to think so. . . . The art of life consists in making the best of the tools you have, and playing your part with courage, as if they were all keen and strong. . . . You believe in Church and State, and your environment is radical; or you hold the newest heresies, and the tone of the place is all saints and mysteries. These things are all less im-

portant than what you have to do, and it is your business to play the game. Then, when you have put self and vanity in the second place, you will be worth quite as much as a man, and worth much more as a schoolmaster."

Pragmatism, opportunism, the stressing of externals ("the façade") even if they belie the inner thought, courage, and pretence ("as if they were"), all these things are characteristics which make the foreigner feel that the Englishman differs from himself and from other human beings. And understatement? Bowen blames "Arnoldides Chiffers" for giving the boy Jones a book bound in calf to reward a faultless translation. "If he had only remarked that Jones was not such a very bad construer after all, it would have had as much effect." Bowen's biographer, his nephew the Rev. W. E. Bowen, tells us that "the signs and traces of sorrow and disappointment were, as a rule, deliberately and carefully hidden away under a covering of reserve which was rarely withdrawn, even before the sympathy of attached and intimate friends". Indeed, repression, the most striking peculiarity of the new Englishman, marks the whole life of Bowen. But it is repression in its highest form.

For Bowen overflowed with affection. From a painful interview with a boy who had to be sent down from school he returned with tears rolling down his cheeks. He mourned the death of those of his old pupils who fell in the South African war "with the somewhat bitter feeling that the sacrifice of them had been unnecessary", says his biographer,

and of one of them he tells us: "Edward Bowen loved this young officer almost as his own son, and hardly knew how to bear the intelligence that he had succumbed to enteric fever. The same night that the news came—so the story goes—he went his rounds as usual, some time after lights were out, and was seen by a wakeful boy, whose door was open, to stop by the panel on which the name of the officer had been carved when a member of the House, and by the glimmer of the flickering candle in his hand slowly to trace over with his finger the letters in the wood. Edward Bowen spoke of him a little while afterwards to a lady, who in response said something of her hope that good might come out of the war. 'Ah', was the sad reply, 'but I want my boy'." This warmth of feeling, never expressed to the boys, or at the most conveyed by the tone of voice in which he would sometimes address one of his pupils with that formula all his own, beginning and ending the sentence with the word "boy", was nevertheless understood and even reciprocated by many of them.[1] The pages where his biographer describes his method in the schoolroom form one of the most delightful passages in English biographical literature. Under a surface of what might almost be called indiscipline reigned the most perfect harmony, because the boys never went beyond what the master they loved deemed

[1] After having drawn these inferences from Bowen's official biography, I consulted an old Harrovian who was in Bowen's House and worked under him. His views on the whole confirmed those I had formed.

to be the limit. His "please" did as much as the threat or the stern look of a disciplinarian. The flowers that sometimes adorned his buttonhole and which, unmindful of his principle never to give rewards, he would hand out after a brilliant reply or a proof of application, were the most highly valued and most eagerly contested prizes.

Without a wife, without children of his own (he never married), Bowen preserved the equilibrium of a soul thirsting for love by a daily and unceasing devotion to his task and by a ruthless physical exertion. He played cricket as long as he could, and football to the end of his life. One occasion, when he played football without intermission for six hours, has become famous in the annals of Harrow. He was an enthusiastic walker and an untiring cyclist. In fact, his sublimation was so complete that it probably did not allow his psychology to suffer from the effects of repression.

Yet this genuine new Englishman never was a pupil of a public school. Born in 1836, he had been educated, partly abroad, partly at a private school, and afterwards at King's College, London, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. How did he acquire the characteristics which, as we have seen, did not exist in England half a generation before his birth? We have indeed observed that Dr. Arnold's system of making "officers" by stamping into boys a reverence for the qualities of Christianity, manliness and enlightenment which could, by definition, not be theirs, led automatically to the ritualistic

conception of life, and that this, and not the educational reform at which he had aimed, was indeed the real consequence of his head mastership at Rugby. This, however, did not yet make psychological ritualism the rule of life of the whole *h*-aspirating population of England.

We must remember, however, that Dr. Arnold's endeavours were not solitary. As was shown in the previous chapter, there were reformers elsewhere than at Rugby, even prior to Arnold's appointment. Dr. Arnold studied their work very closely. There had, at the beginning of his head mastership, been a strong current of popular prejudice against him, but it had gradually subsided and as time went on he found that parents believed in him as enthusiastically as his pupils. The number of boys rose every year, and eventually he was supported by a large party in the country. Numerous were the new schools founded after the model of Rugby: in the 'forties Marlborough, Cheltenham, Lancing and Rossall, in the 'fifties Wellington and Broadfield, and in the 'sixties Clifton and Malvern. The other public schools also enjoyed a renewed prosperity. During the head mastership of Dr. Vaughan, from 1844 to 1859, the number of boys at Harrow increased from 69 to 469. The social prestige of the schools, and their power to open closed doors, rose at the same time. Before 1867, we are told by Mr. O. F. Christie, in his excellent work *The Transition from Aristocracy*, the Church, the Bar, the Services, and the House of Commons were continually recruited by contingents from Rugby and its daughter

schools. And in all these schools reigned the spirit of Arnold: order, discipline, Christianity and repression, which must needs engender the ritualistic conception of life. Improved transport, and in particular the growth of the railways, made it easier for parents to send their children away to enjoy the benefits of the new education.

Instruction, in all these nurseries for the sons of the old and of the new masters, was relatively unimportant. "The real advantage of the English public-school system", writes C. H. Pearson, who was at Rugby at this period, "is perhaps to be found in the fact that it discourages overwork." A Royal Commission which investigated into the public-school system reported in 1864 that numerous schoolmasters held that knowledge was of no importance as compared with character. Formalism was of more moment for the "officers" of the future, who had to be made into what they were not by nature, and were trained therefore to observe artificial form in the most unexpected circumstances. "There comes back to my mind", writes Mr. Bernard Darwin, "a certain large and splendid kitchen-fire at which people toasted. There are some three or four chairs on which sat the most eminent toasters in blazers; there was the rank and file and there were the fags toasting not for themselves but for their masters. These had to stand on the very outskirts, insinuating a humble fork wherever they could, and having their pieces of bread periodically knocked off amongst the cinders. The whole assembly of toasters was ranged in definite ranks, and I have

no manner of doubt that there was a rule prescribing who might sit in those chairs."

It is so easy to see how in the 'forties, 'fifties, and 'sixties the minds of the sons of the masters of England were being moulded into a uniform shape. The young Samurai, who were destined to be functional rather than individual, were being trained in self-repression, reticence, and restraint. Character became their distinctive attribute, not intelligence or any of the other things that make people stand out from the collectivity. To the narrow collectivity, the school, in which his personality was merged, went out the boy's sole and loyal devotion. Society, the larger collectivity, became essentially the property and the preserve of the young masters. That the sexual urge was particularly to be repressed or at least hidden is a natural corollary of this conception of life: it makes for communion and for response, and thereby weakens the capacity to command. Moreover, chastity was, as we have seen, the only precept of Christianity, apart from formalist sabbatarianism, that was within the capacity of a fundamentally irreligious nation. Its masters had therefore to practise it more than any of the underlings. The outward practice of institutional religion and the habit of honouring the virtue of chastity were the two means of annexing the democratic religious urge for the benefit of the young masters of England.

Now it is a remarkable fact that, actually, the ritualistic conception of life which was being instilled into the boys at public schools goes much

farther in the direction of genuine Christian ethics than the religious movement which had to be superseded or at least neutralised. In his book *After Puritanism 1850–1900*, Mr. Hugh Kingsmill argues that "the heyday of what we nowadays call Victorian morality may roughly be placed between 1790 and 1820". This view would make the Regency, among other things, the culminating point of sexual repression in England. It results from the author's wish to place the start of the Puritan break-up before the moment when Puritanism had spread from professedly religious circles to those which had embraced psychological ritualism. Indeed, the conception of life which has spread through the public schools and affected most of those brought up in them since the days of Dr. Arnold was not merely puritanical in the restricted sense of the word, but it was more genuinely Christian than that of the Churches. It taught men to limit the range of all their desires, and not merely that of their sex-urge. Schopenhauer argues somewhere that the farther we extend the tendrils of our being, the more liable to unhappiness we become, and this is why blind people, who are deprived of the sense which gives men the greatest amount of contact with the outside world, are usually so peaceful and satisfied. In this sense, no doubt, the ritualistic conception of life could almost give to those who profess it a restfulness unknown to ordinary human beings. Unhappily the civilian "officer" does more than limit his contacts with the outer world; he also tries not to respond to it. And, except in rare

cases like Edward Bowen, there is no more dangerous way of living.

Every year since the days of the Reform Act, the public schools of England have turned out a growing number of people who, either immediately or after a preliminary stage at one of the Universities, have carried into life a novel view of human conduct, and have approached all human relationships from the peculiar angle of psychological ritualism. Many of them, as we have seen, went into posts of eminence and exercised a considerable influence upon their contemporaries. It is not difficult to understand that their ideas spread with great rapidity to people who never were alumni of any of the public schools. The English have never suffered from that sense of equality which is so acute among the French, and which is so incompatible with the spirit of freedom that allows the fullest scope to human capacities. They are affected to a high degree by inequality's natural corrective, the tendency to emulate their social betters. This is what, in his book on *England and the English*, which has already been mentioned and which was published in 1832, Lord Lytton calls "that eternal vying with each other, that spirit of show, that lust of imitation which characterises our countrymen". He attributes it to "the peculiar nature of our aristocratic influences. As wealth", he says, "procures the alliance and respect of nobles, wealth is affected even where not possessed: and, as fashion, which is the creature of an aristocracy, can only be obtained by resembling the fashionable; hence

each person imitates his fellow, and hopes to purchase the respectful opinion of others by renouncing the independence of opinion himself."

"The prevalence of snobbery, that characteristic and notorious vice of the Victorians", says Mr. O. F. Christie, "is strong evidence of the undiminished social sway of the upper classes." He quotes an impressive array of authorities in support of his statement: Thackeray, Trollope, Disraeli, Dickens, Carlyle, with his denunciation of "Valetism", Matthew Arnold, and *Punch*. The author attributes the particular prevalence of the social climber to the influence of the House of Commons, which, even after the Reform Act of 1832, remained a social centre, where all the new politicians mixed with the old masters. Whatever may have been the particular part played by the aristocracy and the House of Commons, the sense of emulation is a trait which the English owe to the spirit of freedom which is itself the result of their insular position. It is therefore another gift of the tribal god. And it contributed to spread the ritualistic conception of life in the same way as it popularised wigs during the Restoration. Even people who cannot be accused of being either snobs or "climbers" accept the standards set from above: it is a national habit.

A factor which has considerably assisted the rapidity of the greatest psychological transformation that has ever taken place in England is the lack of continuity between successive generations. It is a remarkable fact that, comparatively speaking, there is less contact between parents and their children

in England than elsewhere. This was already noticeable in early fifteenth-century England as depicted in the Paston letters. It was considered right that the affections of women should be entirely engrossed by their husbands and that a certain coldness should be displayed towards their children, who were often treated with considerable harshness. Whenever possible, parents sent their children to live with other people, who, having even fewer obligations towards them, exploited them without mercy, especially the girls. Naturally, the result was that children treated their parents with more reverence than confidence, and there was little love lost between successive generations. With the softening of manners during the centuries that followed relations between parents and children of course tended to become more affectionate. But even so, three hundred years later, continental travellers noted with surprise how easily English parents parted from their children. And nowadays English parents still trouble themselves much less than the French about a *dot* for their daughters, or about leaving a large inheritance to their children. They want above all to give them a good start in life, but they rarely save merely in order to leave them capital, whether large or small. They continue to have less hesitation than other parents in sending their children to boarding-schools.

It is not improbable that we have, here, the explanation of the apparent contradiction between the revolutionary temper of the English and their attachment to ancient forms and ancient names.

Uninfluenced by the older generation which is naturally more conservative, children go their own way, think for themselves, and are more independent. In fundamentals, they lose touch more easily with their parents. To preserve some kind of communication and intercourse with their elders, they are compelled to call their new thoughts and their new aspirations by the old names of what resembles these notions most in the mental armoury of the elders. The agnostic son of a Quaker will speak to his father of God, meaning the supreme ethical good, while the father understands him to refer to the individual Creator of Heaven and Earth, in the same way as a modern daughter, when promising to her mother that she will be good, may intend to convey no more than that she will be careful. The outsider may infer that traditional views about the Godhead and about virtue are still held by the new generation in England. He will be mistaken.

The new conception of life, instilled into the new masters of England by the public schools, and absorbed by the new generation, spread downwards unimpeded owing to the English spirit of social imitation. The lack of continuity between successive generations allowed the change to take place much more rapidly than it could have done in other countries. Throughout England, people learned to dissemble and to standardise their reactions to the outside world. Everywhere, certain actions began to be avoided because they were of the kind that are "not done" and others were done because they were "the right thing". Passion became an

indecent display, and weak sentimentalism took its place as the only tolerable outlet. Fathers released their repressed emotions by treating their sons in the fashion of the fifteenth century and their wives like chattels. Humour became a necessary drug for these neurasthenics, because it is a way of smoothing things out and making them bearable. The rigour of the Sabbath increased owing more to the solemn appeal of formalism than to a deeply religious need. The vindictive God of the Old Testament superseded the God of the New Dispensation, because Jehovah's inhumanity harmonised better with the juxta-human mentality that was developing with such crazy rapidity. Apart from literature, which came almost by instinct to a people familiar with the majesty of the Authorised Version, beauty and art were condemned to a long hibernation. Buildings became horrible and imitative, and the real architectural contribution of the age consisted in nightmare railway stations, Crystal Palaces and Albert Memorials. In one direction, indeed, the ordinary bourgeois was still able to give free rein to his sense of beauty: the traditional love of nature, innate in the inhabitants of this beautiful isle, continued to be tolerated by the psychological ritualists. Nature is impersonal. To be lyrical and ecstatic about trees, blades of grass, butterflies and sunsets saved people from being personal about themselves and other men. The sense of natural beauty, moreover, was connected with the ancient sense of national superiority. The English landscape remained the best in the world.

The uniform society that shaped itself after the middle of the nineteenth century was not without its heretics. Lord Palmerston, with his highly coloured clothes,[1] his absence of formalism, his outspokenness, was a survival of the pre-ritualistic Englishman. Disraeli, that adorable Italian Jew who became the head of the Government of England and of her subject races in the United Kingdom, walks through the nineteenth century, smiling quizzically, oriental, mysterious, a cynic and at the same time a romantic, but ever free from the ritualistic conception of life. This Conservative leader gave England a great democratic reform which meant a new dilution of the power of the masters. He made the Queen an Empress, thus symbolising the fact that England was spreading itself out across a conglomeration of nations, and would thereby eventually dissolve the individuality it had so recently acquired.

We have noted that the *h*-aspirating classes, which have adopted the new-English ideal, still display traces of the normal humanity of their fathers, and we have concluded that this was natural because the new ideal is artificial and inhuman. There is still less reason to be surprised at the fact that the ideal did not permeate to the lowest strata of the population. The language cleavage divides the English workman from the middle and upper classes in a way that is more marked than any purely

[1] He wore a brown overcoat, light grey trousers, green gloves and blue studs, when, in 1861, he visited Queen Victoria after the death of Albert the Good.

economic distinction. Moreover, the wage-earner has not the same incentive to imitate his betters. For, when he reaches the age of twenty, he has little chance of further improving his position. He therefore marries and begets children sooner than the salaried Englishman who always entertains the hope of betterment. The avenues of advancement are closed to him, and he has no reason, therefore, to vie with his social superiors. The agricultural labourer is still more completely cut off from the class that is immediately above him. The English proletariat has remained human and normal.

XV

THE FUTURE OF THE ENGLISH

Back to humanity!

Coming Events in Great Britain and Ireland, a monthly paper issued for the use of the Press by the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland, contained in its number of September 1930, the following announcement:

NOT "ALIENS" BUT "VISITORS"

Home Office poster compliment to our foreign guests.

At the suggestion of the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland the Home Office has paid a gracious compliment to foreigners visiting this country by withdrawing a poster headed: NOTICE TO ALIENS, and substituting for it the words:

NOTICE TO FOREIGN VISITORS.

The withdrawn poster has been exhibited in British Consular Offices and Passport Offices abroad for many years and has caused not a little surprise and comment especially among the nations who use the word "alien" in a manner very dissimilar to that adopted in Great Britain. The new poster will be welcomed by everyone interested in travel to this country.

The action of the Home Office, referred to in the above statement, has been received with much approval by journals in all parts of the world. The statement was issued to the Press by the Travel Association on August 5th.

This important announcement is followed by another entitled "More Bathrooms for Foreign Visitors". Could any reader of *Coming Events* still doubt that a great change is taking place in England? Foreigners will in future be considered to require bathrooms, just like the English, a fine recognition of the fundamental oneness of the human race. And they will, upon occasions, no longer be "aliens". Marxists will sneeringly point to trade depression and the need for encouraging Americans, Hollanders, Germans and Scandinavians to come and spend money in England. But they forget that as long as an inquisitorial system is maintained at all ports of debarkation, and as long as the foreigner, whether an "alien" or a "foreign visitor", is shown too plainly that he is an underling and a nuisance, a matter of words can make no difference to the collective inhospitableness of the English which forms such a striking contrast to their individual hospitality. The notice about foreign visitors is not due to economic realism, which in this as in other respects the English continue to disregard. It is the result of the fact that the English language is no longer the private property of the English, but that, apart from Americans and people of the Dominions, numerous outsiders are familiar with it and are imposing their personal stamp upon it. This is why good English nouns like: Colonial, Alien and

Chinaman are doomed to disappear, and will be replaced by the less offensive: Citizen of the Dominions, if not Britisher, Foreign Visitor and Chinese. England, in short, is no longer mentally self-contained.

Three influences have already begun to modify the English character: the spread of English civilisation, the emancipation of women, and that mysterious and ubiquitous factor, the *Zeitgeist*. Of the effect of the first factor an example has just been given: the English are no longer masters of their own speech. But this is only a small item in the large list of revolutionary changes which are bound to occur. English civilisation has spread, with the language and the Government of England, over all the alien parts of the United Kingdom. It has also travelled to Canada, to the Antipodes, and wherever self-governing British Dominions are found. Even in India the English language and English civilisation occupy an important position, while the African continent will for many generations to come witness a spread of English ideas.

The United States also speaks the language of old England, has a legal and political system akin to that of the erstwhile Mother Country, reads some of its books, and sometimes thinks the same thoughts. For it is impossible to deny that many English ideas have penetrated the wall of mental protectionism with which certain Americans have tried to surround their country. These ideas were carried by the English language, the greatest gift England could give to America. Language, indeed, is the

most powerful carrying agency of the world, but it carries both ways and America has in its turn influenced England. The language itself has been affected by the fact that a new nation, more than three times as numerous as the English, and composed of so many different elements that it has become representative of the whole of European mankind, is using it. And, carried by the language, there have come back new conceptions about the running of the daily Press, the fashion in which public opinion can be manœuvred by advertisement, the management of business and even of politics. American statesmen have influenced the daily life of English people: the English-speaking world would not be entirely the same if the tragic shadow which is called Woodrow Wilson had not flitted across its stage. The first woman who took her seat in the House of Commons was an American.

Indeed, no civilisation spreads without dilution. There is a perpetual process of osmosis, and for everything given something has to be accepted in return. Reciprocal influences are exchanged not only with the citizens of the United States, but with those of all the British Dominions and of all the nationalities that compose the United Kingdom. The upper middle-class in Ireland has bathrooms and subscribes to the circulating libraries of London. Tolerance, a virtue that is entirely alien to the Irish temperament, is making its way into Ireland where mixed marriages are accepted by the community at large. But Ireland exports its national theatre, its playwrights, its plays, its great surplus

of medical doctors, its priests and its nuns. English newspapers that value their Irish circulation are most careful to refuse advertisements which would not pass muster with the Irish censorship. This institution, inspired by the spirit of Rome, can be said therefore to exercise a direct influence on England. The Scottish upper middle-class, which has for generations maintained a clan spirit that disregarded social distinctions, is now sending its children to English public schools. Indeed, Scotland itself has created public schools of its own. But, as far as I can see, the only way in which these establishments deserve their name and rank is that their founders succeeded in making them known as public schools. Certainly, Scottish public schools seem to differ from their English prototype by their careful avoidance of anything that might crush the personality of their pupils and mould them into beings hermetically closed to every impression from the outside world.

The main point about the influence exercised upon England by the natives of other parts of the United Kingdom and of the Dominions is that these British citizens from foreign parts are, all of them, normal human beings. The English were, for many years, governed by a Welshman who naturally had not the English attitude towards truth, who had not their reticence, but was glib of tongue and devoid of the tenacity and unshakable ingenuousness of the English. They have been governed by a religious Scot who is actuated by abstract principles. Lord Beaverbrook, who has made a deep impression

upon English public life, is a Canadian. Mr. Hughes, who provided patriots with the beautiful metaphor of the rifle slung on the plough-handle, is an Australian. We need not even look towards the distant future, when the population of the Dominions, together with that of a Scotland endowed with Home Rule, will outnumber the English, and when the language of the ruling classes of the Empire will have either the soft Canadian burr or the Cockney virtues of Australian. Long before that time has arrived, the human beings whose mother tongue is English will have launched such an attack against psychological ritualism that, even without assistance from elsewhere, they will have triumphantly carried the position.

The second influence which is already strongly militating against the ritualistic conception of life is the conquest of political and social equality by women. Women were given the suffrage in 1918. It would not be a true representation of the facts to attribute this development to the World War. Wars do no more than speed up the natural course of events. In this, wars resemble the action of great men; they never create, but they concentrate existing currents in a way which enables the gathered strength of these currents to overcome all barriers. The suffrage may have been the reward for services rendered by women to the community in its hour of dire peril. It may also merely have been the result of the growing scepticism resulting from years of senseless slaughter which made the masters of Great Britain realise that there was no more reason

for withholding the vote from women than from proletarians. The political emancipation of women was, in a way, a purely negative measure. Every further extension of the vote means a weakening of the individual vote, every new ballot paper diminishes the proportionate weight of every other vote returned. And as the vote, in any case, is nothing more than a means of expressing approval or disapproval of the party which provided the titular head of the administration, while positive power remains in the hands of those whom no general election can affect, the granting of the vote had no very definite importance.

If the vote were an instrument of power, women could become mistresses of the destinies of England in a few years' time. They form the majority in every constituency. They could therefore return a Parliament composed exclusively of women, which could do away with the masculine House of Lords after three years, and only appoint women civil servants. They could even induce the King to abdicate, and, passing over the claims of the Prince of Wales and of the Duke of York, surround the Princess Elizabeth with a Council of Regency composed of women. Apart from the increased danger of a foreign war, resulting from the well-known bellicosity of non-combatants, feminine government might mean better government.

There is no likelihood, however, that such things will come to pass, because women prefer to vote like their husbands and their sweethearts, and are incapable of exercising a nation-wide activity that

would be based upon the loyalty of women towards women. The conquest of the vote has little practical importance, but its significance as a symbol is immense. It means the recognition by the organised community of the fact that women have achieved complete equality with men (while married women have now more rights than their husbands). Women have gained admission to all careers, they can earn their own living, and play their part in the artistic life of the country. They have even recovered from a temporary set-back and reconquered equality before the gallows. The double standard of morality is rapidly disappearing and the feminine point of view can no longer be ignored.

Now, as we have seen before, women are universal, they are the human race itself, and are, therefore, much less affected by national differentiation than men. Englishwomen suffer to a lesser degree from sexual repression than Englishmen. Psychological ritualism has affected them much less. Women are realists, catch-phrases only interest them if they have content, and the cult of externals, of make-believe and of formulas has never attracted them. As the influence of these ordinary human beings, who are, moreover, more numerous than the men of England, increases, the nation is bound gradually to abandon the ritualistic conception of life.

There is a third reason why the peculiar English attitude towards life is bound to change, a reason which, like the two others, is at work already and has already brought about important modifications. It can be most easily designated by that somewhat

vague word, the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of our period, which is one of rebellion against the standards that have long been accepted, of frankness, of sexual freedom, of scientific investigation, and of revaluation of class distinctions. In a way, it is an international spirit, and not restricted to England alone. Now, with the rapid growth of mechanical methods of transmitting opinions, the insularity of the English is gradually disappearing, and they are becoming increasingly familiar with the thoughts and views of normal human beings. Many of these thoughts are by definition the very opposite of psychological ritualism.

There have been few periods at which youth has set its face with such determination against the idols of the previous generation. In almost every country this revolt takes on a different complexion. In England it has fastened upon what is called Victorianism as the symbol of the old tyranny. Already the first generation of rebels is growing older. Those who were in their twenties when the World War broke out, and were the last Englishmen to know the sensation of gold coins jingling in their pockets, who suffered as soldiers or as civilians, saw the failure of the settlement of 1919 which was to bring them the reward of their sacrifices, and have never settled down to reverence and smugness, are already followed by a newer generation that questions even the cynicism of its immediate predecessors and asks for a positive restatement of principles. Perhaps the revolt against Victorianism has already given rise to a new reaction. There is a craze for

samplers, wax-fruit and polkas, and the barrel-organs have taken to playing "Daisy, Daisy", a tune popular in the early 'nineties. This fashion, however, does not go deep. It is purely aesthetic, and the people who waltz in long skirts and collect hideous Victorian porcelain live in a way that would have horrified their great-grandmothers.

Mr. Lytton Strachey's wayward sympathies for the period when psychological ritualism was at its height are typical of the feelings of his contemporaries. He approached the Victorians with sarcasm on his lips. Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, Cardinal Manning and General Gordon became, in his book, fantastic and laughable puppets. If he had troubled to penetrate more deeply into their minds, he would have seen them very differently. Then he settled down to dissect Queen Victoria. This time, he did allow himself the leisure needed for studying his subject, and the result was that, having come to scoff, he stayed to praise. May we conclude that he has become converted to the Victorian outlook? Certainly not! Mr. Lytton Strachey is one of the greatest living writers of England, but he is an artist, not an historian. It is not the objective vision of the past that fascinates him. Like his own Prince Albert, he is a stranger in his time and in his environment; he withdraws into the past in order to find there the satisfaction of a craving and the realisation of a dream. To Queen Victoria was meted out this super-subjective treatment, perfectly beautiful and unhistorical, which afterwards became the share of Queen Elizabeth

and her contemporaries in a work of still greater artistry and inaccuracy. Mr. Strachey, who has, perhaps, contributed more than any single Englishman alive to restore intelligence to the position it used to occupy in England, cannot possibly be accused of being the prophet of a return to Victorianism. His work tells the story of an individual flight into the past, and the England of Queen Victoria was but a resting-place upon the road.

The revolt against the nineteenth century finds what is perhaps its most complete expression in D. H. Lawrence's pamphlet, *Pornography and Obscenity*. I do not mean that Lawrence's theory of the ubiquity of sex and of the impossibility of purity and even of sublimation, or his epileptic though original treatment of the theme, are in any way representative. But his very intemperance and excess give resonance and power to his words. Let us listen to his denunciation of the nineteenth century, "the eunuch century, the century of the mealy-mouthed lie, the century that tried to destroy humanity . . . that great century of lies which, thank God, we are drifting away from . . . the century of purity and the dirty little secret". Notwithstanding the waxen apples under glass shades and the efforts of furniture dealers who, having run out of Hepplewhite, are trying to push Victorian furniture, the younger generation's views of the great century of Christian manliness is not very different from that of Lawrence.

For the attitude which looks at life "as though it were" what it ought to be is being superseded by one of utter frankness. Life is now taken for what it

really appears to be, and the individual has no qualms in giving expression to the reactions it is allowed to call forth in him. Everywhere the screen of ritualism is being rent. If a super-imposed scheme of life is no longer accepted without question, the reticence which was the only cloak for make-believe is equally cast aside. Though the censor has by no means yet been reduced to the condition of an impotent spectre, things are now being printed in England which the Paris of the Second Empire would not have tolerated, and there is little pretence that Hebrew morality still rules the land.

Complete freedom of expression is the rule in a growing number of circles. It is especially in matters of sex that the modern frankness reveals itself. And the new freedom does not manifest itself only in words. Bloomsbury, St. John's Wood, Hampstead and many other places teem with experimental colonies where a new sex-morality is being hammered out, mainly on negative lines. Women as well as men practise polygamy, which is natural only to men. It is not surprising that a puritan like Mr. Aldous Huxley has risen in revolt against this moral anarchy. But his protest does not affect the importance of the modern libertine's great contribution, which has been that of casting off the sense of sin. If the "moderns", who are perhaps no longer the very young, have gradually rediscovered the truth that licence does not bring happiness, they have nevertheless continued to bear witness to their former discovery that repression does not bring happiness either, and that, moreover, it makes the soul sick.

Thus, though the barriers are torn down, it remains for other generations to build the road to happiness. But however it runs, the road will not pass along the landmarks of psychological ritualism.

Possibly the present freedom is only a passing phase. But even so the mentality of which it is a symptom is not of a transient nature. And it is this mentality which will act as a dissolvent upon the sexual repression that is the concomitant of psychological ritualism. There was a time in the history of modern Europe when the free and individual examination of religious dogma was considered as reprehensible as the questioning of accepted sexual morality was by the people of yesterday. Yet freedom eventually forced its way into the first field, as it now has into the second. Psycho-analysis, with its soul-shattering practice and its sound premises, at one time fascinated the moderns and helped them to break away from their inhibitions. All the English now admit that there is a sex-problem, even though the majority would not countenance the methods of approaching it which are admissible in a growing number of coteries. This is the result of the new scientific spirit.

The nineteenth century honoured science. But its science was arrogant and positivist, and sure of possessing the key to the hiding-place of all the materials out of which the complete edifice of knowledge could be constructed. Technical progress and prosperity had turned the heads of the Victorians. The moderns have more humility. They have a glowing faith, but they know that faith has no com-

pelling rational certainty. They are convinced that the spirit of honest investigation will never cease to guide them deeper into the mysteries of the universe. They are prepared to form for themselves fruitful working hypotheses. But any of these hypotheses they will readily discard when presented with a more plausible alternative. They also believe that science can help mankind and make it happier. The optimism of scientists is sometimes a little touching, but it is rapidly losing the arrogance which still clings to those pseudo-scientists who want to rid the world of all knowledge that cannot be acquired in the laboratory. A new humanism is growing up in which the disciplines of the mind, and in particular the history of human beings rather than of political *tripotage*, will form an harmonious alliance with the sciences of nature. When this humanism, which has no patience with the shibboleths of pedagogics based on repression and suppression, reaches the adult stage, it will sweep before it the whole educational system of England, and turn the rising generation into normal human beings.

Striking changes are taking place already in the attitude of the English towards the things of the mind. The new scientific spirit is conquering the universities, old and new, and chairs are being created for novel branches of learning. To talk about intellectual matters becomes less odd every day. Philosophers and scientists find an open pulpit in the popular Press. Relativity and other subjects which nobody understands are eagerly discussed. English people are gathering together to converse

about serious matters in a serious spirit. At the same time, beauty is recovering its traditional hold upon the minds of Englishmen. Arnold Dolmetsch has reconstructed the lute, the viol, the recorder, the clavichord and the harpsichord, and has enabled the English to rediscover the great Elizabethan music which can only be understood when it is played on the instruments for which it was composed. Folk-songs and folk-dances have been saved from oblivion, and the return of old English dancing is helping to bridge the gap which separates the English from their human past.

Even in architecture, where psychological ritualism tempted the English into their ugliest sins, beauty is hesitatingly reintroduced. Already a few architects, inspired by the experimental audacity of normal human beings, have had the courage to design buildings that are not servile imitations of a dead style and that do not support the traditional columns and display unimaginative and unoriginal ornaments. In a few recent buildings surfaces have been adequately combined and masses interrelated, while a dignified severity is superseding machine-made mouldings that recur as in a nightmare. It would be too much, as yet, to expect novel and harmonious decorations in each of these more recent efforts. Adequate embellishment, and in particular the commissioning of sculptors to work, not in fanciful independence, but in due subordination to the plans of the master-builder, can only be expected when the public taste has been patiently educated. Architects know too well that before a

new edifice can arise, the old must be rooted out to its very foundations. The big banks, which are among the worst sinners against architectural beauty, have not yet advanced beyond the great mind that designed South Kensington Museum. I recently saw an excellent block of residential flats constructed in the Finchley Road. The proportion, the disposition of doors and of windows, the straightness and the dignity of line, the suitable ornamentation, the colour of the material, everything was a joy to the eye and to the mind. I turned the corner. One of the "Big Five" had reserved premises for a local branch. Two solemn and ridiculous columns broke the even surface of the façade and proclaimed the power of inertia of the banking system of England. But the new Horticultural Hall in Westminster, Adelaide House near London Bridge, the new wing of Olympia and the head office of the London Underground Railways prove that, in the face of opposition, beauty is building her way into England.

The spirit of the time is active in still another direction. The working-class, a whole population that was never touched by the ritualistic conception of life, is acquiring an increasing share in the life of the country. Directness and the absence of formalism are, as a consequence, making their way into the most sacred precincts that have been for generations monopolised by "civilian officers", bred in the tradition of unresponsiveness. The Foreign Office, which is still the preserve of the best public schools of England, may remain an exception, but the public schools themselves have lost exclusive-

ness as a result of the most recent transfer of wealth which compels them to receive a new type of pupil that had been contemplated neither by the reformers of the eighteen-twenties and 'thirties nor by those of the 'sixties.

The England of Dr. Arnold and Dean Inge is going. But will it leave no impression upon the world? This would indeed be a regrettable development, for, if the creatures of psychological ritualism cannot be really happy, they are nevertheless outwardly harmonious and beautiful to behold. But I do not see why self-restraint need disappear when self-repression goes: nor why truthfulness should go the way of reticence; why loyalty and the faithful adherence to the given word should vanish with formalism, and the spirit of fairness with that of arrogance. Modernism and humanity are eclectic, not revolutionary. And there is another aspect of the ritualistic conception of life which the world cannot afford to lose: its concentration on outward form which attaches extremely little importance to "absolute values". This indeed may be its lasting contribution to the human mind. For normal human beings are only prepared to set up as idols things which they consider to be realities. The English can teach mankind that only form exists and, when mankind has realised this, it will renounce its idolatry and consecrate itself exclusively to the search for happiness. Similarly a great future is opening before the English, who may yet become the leaders of the world in the appreciation of art. For since the days when art was nothing but the

craftsman's joy in his work, human beings have gone astray under the influence of platonistic theories which have looked upon the beautiful form as the bearer of a message, and the handmaid of the illusion which they have called "truth". They have thought that beauty was the splendour of truth, and they have forgotten that truth was but a hypothesis invented for the inspiration of men who suffered at the thought that their nimble brains were exercised in the service of vanity. The English gentleman, having stumbled upon the discovery that form is the only thing that matters, his successor, the British Citizen of the World, will realise that the beautiful form is not an envelope which conveys a message of truth, but that beauty is the name men have given to the common quality of agreeable form.

Restored to the enjoyment of the realms of the mind, which made their ancestors quick-witted men, original thinkers and builders of systems, the British Citizens of the World will retain from the arsenal of their gentlemanly predecessors their contempt for the phantasmata of metaphysics. If, like the gentlemen of the ritualistic era, they refuse to look beyond form, this will not be because they worship form or are afraid of the alleged reality that lies beyond, but because they know that the world itself is form, fleeting, flowing, passing, yet exquisite and inebriating while it appears to be there, a thing to cherish and to play with while it seems to last.